

BOYS. READ THE RADIO ARTICLES IN THIS NUMBER

NOVEMBER 16, 1923

No. 946

FAME
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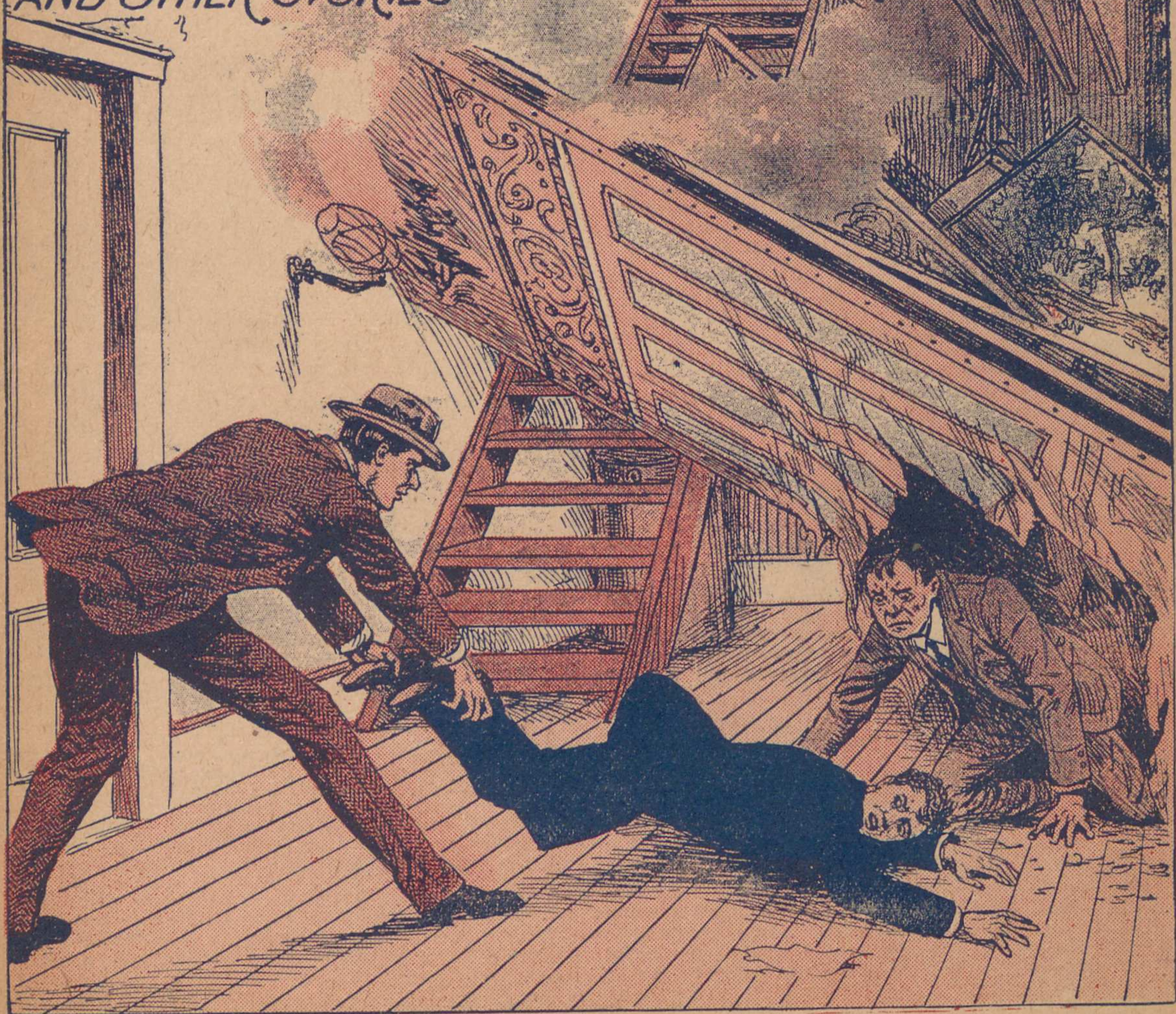
Price 7 Cents

FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY.

FAME BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS
OR THE BOY WHO BOSSED THE THEATRE
AND OTHER STORIES

By A Self-Made Man



He gave a final jerk to Unger's legs, pulling him clear of Chubb, who then came crawling out of the mass of fractured wood and canvas. Another blazing wing fell over on the stairs, and bits of burning canvas dropped down.

Interesting Radio Articles on Pages 24 and 25

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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No. 946

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 16, 1923

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FAME BEFORE THE FOOTLIGHTS

OR, THE BOY WHO BOSSED THE THEATRE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Introduces the Hero and His Friend, Billy Duane.

"Charlie! Charlie Unger! Where the dickens is that boy?"

"Here I am, sir!"

A cheerful-looking, well-built lad suddenly popped out from behind a pile of faded scenery that stood against the white-washed brick wall near the property-room of the Metropolitan Theater. As a temple of the drama, the Metropolitan was on its last legs. It was one of the old guard, so to speak. Its former glory was hoary and mildewed. Its patronage had gone to the dogs, though occasionally it had spasms of prosperity. One of those spasms was on now, but the impression prevailed that it was giving its last kick.

"Do you know, young man, that I sung out three times for you?" said Mr. Chips, the property-man.

"Yes, sir," replied Charlie, truthfully.

"Then why didn't you come sooner? Were you taking a bath, or getting your hair curled?" added Mr. Chips, sarcastically.

"Neither, sir. I was only showing Billy Duane how to do the broadsword combat properly."

"What the dickens has Billy Duane, or you, to do with the broadsword combat? Perhaps you think that the distinguished tragedian who appears here for the first time this evening will ask you to act as his understudy."

This remark of the property-man was, of course, purely ironical.

"Well," replied Unger, serenely, "he might do worse."

"If you haven't a gall!" exclaimed Mr. Chips, regarding the bright boy in astonishment.

"I believe I have, sir," answered Charlie, demurely. "I heard a doctor once say that everybody has got it."

"Got what?" asked the puzzled property-man.

"Gall, sir."

Mr. Chips shied the pasteboard goblet he held in his hand at Charlie's head; but Unger, evidently expecting some such demonstration on the property-man's part, dodged in the nick of time.

"Pick up that goblet, you young scamp, and come into the property-room."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy, obeying the order.

He and Mr. Chips were good friends on the whole, though owing to his irresponsible flow of spirits, he occasionally sorely tried the man's patience.

There was nothing malicious about Unger's nature. As a smart, clear-headed and ambitious boy he was all to the good. But you could not tread on Charlie's toes without finding out he was alive, and very much alive, at that. Unger's father was a member of the orchestra of the Metropolitan. His mother, who once upon a time had been a tight-rope dancer, and a great favorite in her day, kept a theatrical boarding-house; and Charlie said more than once that he had accumulated a good deal of muscle by pounding chuck-steak into the juicy tenderness to which the profession is accustomed. When Unger graduated from the public school he was introduced into the mystery of the region behind the footlights—in other words, he was made a call-boy and an assistant to the property-man, his wages being collected regularly by his mother at the same time that she drew her husband's pay, when business was sufficiently flourishing for the "ghost" to walk.

Charlie yearned to be something better than a call boy. No, he did not want to be an actor, though he believed he could do a few stunts in that line if it came to a pinch. His great ambition was to some day manage a show. Not a bum show, if he could help it, but something worth while.

"There's a barrel of money in it," he often said to his friend Billy Duane, "if you know how to handle things and have ordinary luck."

So with that end in view he kept his eyes and ears well employed, learning all the ins and outs of the business, especially that end which deals with the front of the "house."

"By the way, Charlie," remarked Mr. Chips, after the boy had been industriously helping him fix the rents in the green cover of a property piece, which was to be used to represent part of the bank of a sylvan stream, "do you really think you would ever make an actor?"

"Well, sir, I can't say that I'm particularly anxious to be one. The ghost doesn't seem to walk as regularly in the profession as I would like."

"True enough," sighed Mr. Chips, who had a large family to support.

"Still, I might do worse, as the man remarked when about to marry his cook."

The property-man grinned.

"You see," continued the boy, "I belong to a theatrical family, so there's no telling but I may become a second Booth."

"I never heard that any of you folks were actors," said Mr. Chips, with some curiosity.

"I didn't say they were actors. Mam used to trip the light fantastic on the tight-rope; pop, you know, rasps the big fiddle in the orchestra; my grandfather was a famous 'supe' in his day at the old Bowery in New York, while my grandmother, I have heard, used to wash for the Immortal Forrest. So you see our family is connected with the profession from way back."

"That's true enough, if you put it that way," said Mr. Chips, as he sat down on the repaired "bank," for he was tired after a hard afternoon's work.

But he sprang up again with a promptness that would have made an eye-witness believe that he was accustomed to resting himself on the wing.

"Great Scott!" he howled, tenderly caressing with one hand the seat of his trousers. "What in thunder was that?"

"What's the matter, Mr. Chips?" inquired Charlie, apparently astonished at the sudden agility displayed by the property-man.

"Look here, Unger, did you leave your needle in that cloth?"

"Why, no, sir; here is the one I was working with."

"Well, something stung me worse than a hornet's tail. Perhaps it was a bent pin," and the speaker eyed Charlie with a strong suspicion.

"I've heard of such things," replied Unger, innocently, looking closely at the middle of the "bank." "No, sir," he added; no such thing as a bent pin here. There is something, though. Perhaps if you look you can tell what it is."

Mr. Chips first felt of the obstruction, and then examined it.

"Jumping Jehoshaphat! If it ain't a big thorn! I'd like to know how it came to get in that bank."

CHAPTER II.—Charles Gives an Exhibition of Presence of Mind.

There was a big "first night" crowd at the Metropolitan that evening. McKean Ranter, the "eminent tragedian," had been extensively billed, the newspapers had given him flattering advance notices and public interest in his debut in town was accordingly aroused. The play was a tragedy of the old school, called "The Dwarf of Venice."

McKean Ranter was the Dwarf, a part originally performed by Edmund Kean, a famous English actor, many years ago, and Mr. Ranter believed he was as good as the great original. Charlie Unger had seen many good actors, and thought he knew what good acting was. He sized Mr. Ranter up at a rehearsal, and came to the conclusion that the "eminent tragedian" was something of a "ham." There was one thing, however, which made Charlie mad. That was

the star's discourteous treatment of Estelle Vance, who had been unexpectedly called upon to fill the leading female part in the tragedy, owing to the sudden indisposition of Mrs. McKean Ranter, who always supported her husband. In Unger's opinion, Miss Vance was the cleverest member of the Metropolitan company, and the nicest girl he had ever known. Charlie arrived early at the theater that night, for there was lots for him to do before the time came for him to summon the performers from their dressing-rooms. It was part of his duty during the show to act as the prompter's assistant.

"The Dwarf of Venice" opened with a carnival street scene, for which a mob of male and female supers had been engaged, and Charlie had manufactured a lot of little white paper bags, which he filled with flour, for them to throw at one another, according to stage directions.

"Hello, Charlie," cried Billy, running against Unger as he was carrying a tray full of the bags to circulate among the male and female populace of Venice, who were dressed and ready for the opening scene. "What you got there?"

"Can't you see what I've got, you thick-headed donkey?" explained Charlie. "Here, you're one of the mob; take your pick."

"I won't do a thing to the gals," grinned Billy, grabbing more than his share. "Who you goin' to give that big bag to you've got on your arm?"

"Don't you worry about that big bag," replied Unger. "That'll make it's first appearance on any stage in the second scene."

"The second scene!" ejaculated Billy. "Why, the flour is only used in the first!"

"Who told you that?" answered Charlie, with a chuckle.

"Don't you s'pose I know all about this piece?"

"You think you do; but if you keep your eyes open you may learn something more about it."

"Say, Charlie Unger, what game are you up to?"

"Don't bother me, please. It's nearly eight, and the prompter will ring up in a moment or two. I've got to distribute this load," and Unger began to circulate among the supers.

"There's something in the wind," muttered Duane, "and I'm goin' to find out what it is, bet your boots."

He watched closely, and as the captain of the supers was driving his satellites on the stage, where they were to be discovered when the curtain arose, Billy saw Charlie glide into L. U. E. (upper entrance on the left-hand side of the stage), attach the bag to a cord which hung over the flies, let it swing out, and then haul it up out of sight among the borders. All this took place behind the street "drop" representing the first scene. The bag hung directly above a gilded lounge upon which the "eminent tragedian" was discovered fifteen minutes later when the front scene was drawn up. McKean Ranter was received with a burst of applause. He was made up to represent a grotesque and malignant dwarf, whose disposition was as crooked as his body.

"Why am I fashioned thus for scorn? Why this degraded being?"

Charlie had noticed the two sentences at rehearsal, and the fine possibilities of the situation for startling effect were not lost upon him. No

sooner had McKean Ranter delivered the words, pausing a moment to give effect to his delivery, than Unger, who was negligently leaning against a wing in the upper entrance, released the end of the string which had been tied to a nail in the framework to keep the bag of flour suspended. The effect was electrical. The bag descended like a flash of lightning, struck the star on the wig and, bursting open, deluged him with a cataract of flour. The audience was taken by surprise. So was Mr. Ranter, who was furious, for his opening scene was ruined. He rushed blindly off the stage with his eyes full of flour, consequently he did not observe Billy Duane, who had seen the whole thing and lay convulsed with mirth directly in his path. The consequence was the "eminent tragedian" tripped over him, and shot headlong across the scenes with a thud which almost shook the house.

His wig flew in one direction, his legs in another. The latter being long, they encountered the dainty ankles of a stout female super, and brought her down beside him. The lady screamed "Murder!" Mr. Ranter swore like a trooper, and there was the dickens to pay till the stage manager rushed up and straightened things out. The star was finally pacified, an explanation was made to the audience of the accident, and the play went on. The stage manager instituted an investigation, but it amounted to nothing. Charlie, who came under suspicion because he had charge of the small flour bags, was found in the property-room preparing a small wooden box, painted to represent an iron chest, for its appearance in the second act. He looked so busy and so innocent that the manager did not say anything to him.

"Well," chuckled Unger, when the stage manager turned on his heel, "I've got square with that stuff for the roasting he gave Miss Vance. If he doesn't leave her alone in the future, he will hear from me again, all right."

Mr. McKean Ranter was decidedly out of humor that evening, and he showed his temper in various ways between the acts. Estelle Vance shared the honor of a curtain call with him at the close of the third act, and that did not improve his feelings toward the girl. As soon as they came off he insulted her by some remark intended as a reflection on her ability as an actress. Unger did not know of this, but he saw she was disturbed and excited, and that there were tears in her eyes when he met her on the way to her dressing-room.

"You are doing fine to-night, Miss Vance," he said to her, thinking she was a bit rattled by the success she was making in her part.

"Thank you, Charlie," she replied, with a grateful smile, for she knew that he was thoroughly sincere in his congratulations.

"Don't mention it. I knew you'd get there if you got the chance."

The indignant flush Ranter had brought to her face died away at these words.

"You are very good to encourage me, Charlie. I shan't forget it," and she passed on.

"She's a fine little girl, all right," said the boy to himself, as his eyes followed her sylph-like figure till she tripped up a short flight of steps leading to a tier of dressing-rooms.

The climax of the play came in the fourth act,

and had Mr. Ranter really been the eminent tragedian he assumed to be, the honors would have been fully divided between the star and the leading lady, for Estelle Vance came out strong in the emotional part. As it was, however, McKean Ranter was not in it a little bit with the brilliant young girl, who astonished the company as well as the management by her wonderful power when it came to the test. Charlie watched her whenever he got a chance, and felt a personal satisfaction in the hit she was making.

"She's great, isn't she, Billy?" he said to his friend Duane, as they stood in the wings while the act was drawing to a close.

"Well, I should warble," replied Billy, enthusiastically. "She can give cards and spades to Lillian Burr, who used to do the leads. I didn't think she had it in her."

"Didn't you? Well, I did; I know talent when I see it."

"How could you tell, when she never played a responsible part till now?"

"Ho! She showed what she was capable of by the way she handled the small characters. She's a real natural-born actress. None of your imitation fakirs who put up a big bluff and then fall down when you put it up to them."

"She's right. Look at the way she's putting it over Ranter now. That's acting, all right."

"Bet your whiskers it is! Ranter looks as mad as a hornet."

The girl's splendid acting took the house by storm, and the act ended with a quick drop. Estelle, unfortunately, stood directly in line with the descending curtain. In another instant she would have been dashed to the stage, when Charlie, seeing her peril from the wings, darted forward, seized her around the waist, and dragged her back. Then the heavy piece of wood which held the bottom of the curtain taut fell with a dull thud.

CHAPTER III.—How Charlie Gets Square With the Low Comedian.

The audience saw and understood the danger Estelle Vance was in at the moment the call-boy rushed to her rescue, and when he pulled her clear, and the curtain shut the stage from their view, a roar of applause went up, from the orchestra to the gallery. The principal performers, the "eminent tragedian" excepted, crowded about the now half-fainting girl, held on her feet by Charlie, and congratulated her on her escape, for every one knew what a blow on the head from the curtain pole meant. They also complimented Unger on his presence of mind.

"Both of you will have to go in front," said the stage manager, coming up. "Do you hear that ovation out there? Nothing but a sight of you two will satisfy them."

"Ho, don't ring me in on this! This demonstration is intended for Miss Vance," said Charlie, as he released the little actress.

Estelle had now recovered her self-possession.

"I thank you from the bottom of my heart, Charlie," she said, her pretty eyes beaming with gratitude. "I believe you saved my life."

"Glad to have rendered you a service, Miss

Vance," he replied, his heart thumping with satisfaction.

"Come now," and she extended her hand, "it's your place to lead me out."

She favored him with a bewitching smile.

"Oh, I say," he objected, "I'm not in this."

"Yes, you are," and she dragged him unwillingly toward the right proscenium entrance.

The prompter pulled back the end of the curtain, and Estelle gave Charlie a gentle push forward. The boy saw he was in for it, and made the best of the situation. He stepped toward the footlights, holding Estelle Vance by the hand, and the audience clapped its hand vociferously as they came into view. Both bowed in acknowledgment and stepped back. Estelle released her hand and curtsied to Charlie. Unger returned the compliment, and as the girl retired he bowed again to the audience and backed out himself. McKean Ranter, who had been accustomed to get the call with his wife at the end of this act, was left completely in the shade on this occasion, and perhaps he wasn't a wild actor! Well, say, he fairly frothed at the mouth, and jumped on the stage manager like a thousand of brick. He had some idea of quitting then and there, but was persuaded to reconsider the matter when the manager told him it would hurt his reputation. There was a notice of the show, of course, in all the morning papers and the "eminent tragedian" got the short end of the critics' attention.

Estelle Vance's work was favorably commented on, and she was hailed as a new light upon the local stage. Incidentally, Charlie Unger came in for a share of fame for his part in the curtain incident.

"Seen Chips this mornin', Charlie?" inquired Billy Duane, with a grin, when the two boys met on the stage half an hour before the rehearsal which had been called for ten.

"Certainly I have," replied Unger, serenely.

"Did he give you a layin' out?"

"What for?"

"Oh, come off! For puttin' up that flour job on Ranter, of course."

"Well, he was kind of mad about something," admitted Charlie, with a chuckle; "but I couldn't give him any information about how that bag of flour got into the flies."

"You got off easy, for Briggs, the stage manager, gave him an awful jawing after the show. I heard him say that Chubb, the low comedian, told him that he was sure you were at the bottom of the affair."

"Very kind of Chubb. I shan't forget him."

"I wouldn't. He isn't any friend of yours, if he does board at your ma's."

"We do the same piece to-night, don't we, Billy?"

"Yep."

"Chubb, in the part of Gull, is supposed to get a ducking in the fourth act, isn't he?"

"He gets his duckin' in the canal, and in the fourth act," grinned Billy.

"Don't be funny, please. He comes on in the third scene without hat or coat, shivering as if he was wet and cold."

"That's what he does."

"Well, he doesn't do it natural enough to suit me. He might make a hit with the gallery if he

did it the right way. I'll see what I can do to help him."

"What are you goin' to do to him?" asked Billy, inquisitively.

"You want to know too much all at once. I owe Chubb something, anyway, for trying to hang up ma for last week's board when he had the price all right. Chubb is two-faced, and I don't like that kind of person. So just keep your eyes skinned, and perhaps you'll see an improvement in his acting to-night."

Charlie then recollected that he had some business in the property-room to attend to and walked off.

"Do you see that ducal chair there?" said Mr. Chips, as Unger entered the room.

"Sure thing."

"Give the seat of it a coat of green paint, so it will be dry for to-night."

"Yes, sir," and Charlie got the pot of color, added a small quantity of turps, and was soon carrying out his instructions.

"Now you can varnish this jewel-box," said the property-man when Unger had finished with the chair, "and put it on yonder shelf to dry."

"All right, sir."

In a few minutes Mr. Chips went out of the room. He had not been gone more than a moment before Chubb, the low comedian, sauntered in. If Chubb had not been an actor he probably would have been a detective. He imagined he was an ideal sleuth. He did not like Charlie Unger, and his object in coming into the property-room was to worm himself into the boy's confidence and get him to confess that he was guilty of the flour bag trick. Then he meant to carry his knowledge to Briggs, the stage manager, hoping he would bounce the call-boy. There was nothing mean about Chubb—of course not—but Charlie was dead on to him, all right.

"That was a smart trick you worked on Ranter last night, Unger," he began, with an encouraging grin, as if he was in direct sympathy with the boy.

But Charlie was not deceived for one moment.

"I don't see what makes you think I did that trick, Mr. Chubb," replied the boy, with a guileless look. "Mr. Ranter is a great actor, and I wouldn't do a thing to him."

"Of course you wouldn't," answered Chubb, sarcastically. "You aren't built that way, are you? All the same, you did it, my mocking-bird. Come, now," insinuatingly, "tell me how you managed it. I won't give you away."

Charlie did not bite worth a cent and after several fruitless endeavors to draw the boy out the low comedian, in great disgust, plumped himself down in the ducal chair, which stood invitingly at hand, and began to abuse Unger roundly.

"I wouldn't sit on that chair if I was you," said Charlie, quietly, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"I'll sit where I choose, young man. Do you understand that?" replied Chubb, loftily.

"All right; I thought I'd warn you, that's all."

"What do you mean by that?" asked the comedian, suspiciously.

"Nothing much," answered the boy, coolly, "only I just put a coat of green paint on the seat, and——"

Chubb sprang up as if propelled through a vampire trap. The comedian had on a brand-new pair of light-colored trousers that morning, and he soon discovered that they were completely spoiled.

"You young villain, you've ruined my pants!" he cried, furiously, making a rush at the boy.

He was so mad that he did not notice that Charlie, as he slipped to one side, kicked the pot of green paint directly in his path. The result was that Chubb tripped over it, and as the paint spread in the same direction the comedian went floundering, the actor was spotted from head to foot with big dabs of the brightest emerald tint. When Chubb recovered his feet and saw the condition he was in he would have killed Unger if he could have laid his hands on the boy. He had to go through rehearsal that morning in a pair of dirty overalls, which made him the butt of the whole company, and, what was worse, an object of scorn to the soubrette, on whom he was mashed. There was another good house that evening, attracted rather by the reports of Estelle Vance's remarkable acting than by a desire to see the "eminent tragedian," who was looked upon as a failure. Everything went on swimmingly until the third scene of the fourth act, in which a silly character called Gull, represented by Chubb, is carried off the stage kicking by a party of villagers, who intend ducking him in the canal. Shortly afterward he re-enters, apparently water-soaked, exclaiming: "A double plague on all knaves! I carry half the water of the canal in my pockets," etc.

In due course Chubb was bundled off the stage in great shape, while the gallery roared its approval in its usual hilarious fashion. The comedian removed a part of his costume in the wings and then waited for his cue to re-enter. In a few moments he got it. Then something unexpected happened. Somebody had hung one of the fire pails from a stout nail in the wing. It was full of water. Of course that was no place for it, but it was there, just the same. By some mysterious means the bottom of that pail was jerked up, and its contents descended in a shower bath on the actor just as he started forward, so that his appearance before the audience on this occasion was sufficiently realistic to please the most critical observer. And while he shivered—with no fictitious shiver—on the stage Charlie Unger and Billy Duane were hugging themselves with glee away up in the flies.

"That was the finest snap yet," chuckled Billy.

"Oh, he's easy. People who hunt for trouble generally find it," replied Unger.

"You're all to the good, Charlie, old boy!"

"I manage to get there with both feet when I set out to do anything, bet your whiskers!"

"There goes the curtain signal," said Billy a few moments later. "We'd better get back to the stage."

And they did.

CHAPTER IV.—Charlie Is Engaged for a Road Company.

On the following evening Mrs. McKean Ranter was able to appear, and consequently Estelle Vance was out of the cast, much to the "eminent

tragedian's" satisfaction. The public did not fancy the change and stayed away. The consequence was the star and the company played to empty benches. On Thursday night the bill was changed to "Hamlet," with Mr. Ranter as the melancholy Dane and Mrs. Ranter as Ophelia.

"She's a healthy looking Ophelia," snickered Billy to Charlie, as they stood in the wings watching the final rehearsal.

Truly she was, for she weighed two hundred and fifty pounds.

"Ho," replied Unger in disgust, "Miss Vance is the one who could play that part way up in G."

"I guess she could. She'd look the part, all right."

"Ranter is making a big mistake in insisting that his wife appear as Ophelia. There won't be a corporal's guard here to-night. It looks as if it will be a pretty thin ghost that will walk on Monday, if it materializes at all."

Unger was right. There were not fifty people in the house, and manager and company, not to speak of the star and his wife, felt pretty blue.

"Richard III," was announced for the next (Friday) night. Estelle Vance appeared in the cast, but second to the ponderous Mrs. Ranter. When the curtain rose there were about four hundred people in the house. A little over half were students of a nearby college, who attended in a body and took possession of the family circle. Every one of the students brought a bulging paper bag. Before the show was half over the contents of the bags had found their way to the stage, and McKean Ranter was in a wild rage, for one of his eyes had been closed by an over-ripe egg. Estelle Vance and a few of the other members of the company were tumultuously applauded whenever they appeared, but the star and his wife were received in solemn silence, and when Ranter was alone on the stage he had to dodge a shower of vegetables. The duty to gather up the product of the green grocer fell to Billy Duane.

"There's enough vegetables here to last your mother for a month," grinned Billy, as he showed the pile to Unger.

"I don't think our boarders will be stuck on such a diet after to-night," answered Charlie, laughing.

"They ought to be thankful to get any old thing to eat, for I don't believe the treasurer will have enough dough to go around."

"You're right, Billy. It will be a case of snowballs next week, for I don't think the Metropolitan season will last over to-morrow night."

And it did not. McKean Ranter and his wife disappeared, and the members of the company found themselves out of a job.

"I hear Mr. Rickaby, the late manager of the Metropolitan, is gettin' up a company for the road," said Billy Duane, meeting his friend on the street one day during the following week.

"Is that so?" replied Charlie, with some interest.

"Yep. He's engaged Miss Vance, Tillie Jacobs and Mrs. Benson; also Dudley Tripp, Howard Austin, Chubb——"

"What, that——"

"Yep. He's a pretty good comedian even if he is meaner than dirt by nature."

"Who else?"

"Chips is goin' along."

"Where do we come in?"

"I give it up."

"I'm going to see Rickabay. If I don't get out of town with the show ma will put me at some trade I don't care a brace of shakes for."

"See that you put in a good word for me, Charlie. I can fill in at 'most any old thing."

"I won't forget you, Billy."

Unger was not able to locate the manager that morning, but when he arrived home about lunch time his father, who was helping about the kitchen, told him Mr. Rickaby had sent word that he wanted to see him that afternoon at Ridley's Dramatic Agency. Charlie, filled with visions of a chance on the road, did not let the grass grow under his feet in keeping the engagement. When Unger arrived at the agency Manager Rickaby was talking to Ridley in his private office. The door was open, however, and Charlie easily heard all they said.

"I want a good heavy man and a juvenile who can double in brass; an experienced double bass and tuba who can double stage; a comedian who can do a strong specialty, Dutch preferred, and a few other useful performers who can double in brass. I'm not paying fancy salaries. I pay everything."

"All right, Rickaby. I have some of the people you want on my books now. I'll have 'em around here to-morrow and you can talk to 'em. When do you go out?"

"Next week—just as soon as I can get my paper. I've got the first part of my route booked up solid."

"You're doing well, Rickaby. 'I see you're a hustler. Not an 'angel 'at your back?' with a grin.

"I'm not saying anything," replied Rickaby brusquely.

"Can I do anything else for you?" asked the agent.

"No, I guess not just now," and Manager Rickaby got up and came out into the reception-room.

"Hello, Unger!" greeted the boy. "Come over here; I want to talk with you."

Charlie crossed the room and sat down beside the manager.

"Look here, young man; how are you on props? Do you think you can take hold and make good if I take you on with me?"

The proposition took Unger by surprise.

"What's the matter with Mr. Chips? I heard you'd engaged him," he said.

"That was my idea. But he went over to the Lyric, and I've got to get some one else. Now, I thought you——"

"I'll go," interrupted Charlie quickly. "I can handle the job all right."

"You seem pretty confident. You've been only a short time in the business."

"I've kept my eyes open, sir. I've picked up a heap since I went to work at the Metropolitan."

"I guess you have. Briggs, who goes out with us, has kept an eye on you, and he recommended you to me. Do you think you can double in small parts?"

"Yes, sir. I'm ready to make myself useful in any way."

"You're prepared to hustle, are you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You won't have an easy snap—it's a case of keeping on the move. You'll be the last to get to bed after the show and the first up next morning."

"I'm not looking for snaps, Mr. Rickaby," said Unger resolutely. "I expect to work."

"Well, I'll give you a chance. Do you know any bright young chap about your age who could do small parts and help you wrestle with——"

"Sure. What's the matter with Billy Duane? He was a general, all-around helper at the Metropolitan, and filled in as general utility on the stage."

"He's good, is he?"

"That's what he is, and we'll pull together first-class."

"It's a wonder Briggs didn't mention him to me. Bring him around to-morrow at two."

"All right, sir."

Mr. Rickaby then told Unger what he would pay him, which included board and transportation.

"I shall want you to help me some before we start out, so you had better report every day at two. Understand?"

"Yes, sir."

"That's all. You can go now."

Charlie took his departure in great spirits, and went to hunt Billy Duane up.

CHAPTER V.—Charlie Has a Run-in with Dudley Tripp.

A week later the "Metropolitan Stock Company" opened in Coffeyville in a melodrama called "Fighting Fate." A certain amount of special scenery was carried with the piece, and Charlie Under and his assistant, Billy Duane, found that the most difficult part of their work to handle. They had to give the expressman a hand in loading the cloths (scenes) and the trunks on his wagon. Arriving at the theater, he and Billy had to turn in and help get the stuff into the house, and place the trunks in the proper dressing-rooms to which the stage manager assigned the different members of the company. At night Charlie had to look after the properties, act as prompter, and play the part of one of the villain's accomplices. His name was printed on the program in the cast, and also as "master of properties" under the heading "Executive Staff." As the company was mostly playing one-night stands, it was a case of hustle day after day. The moment the show was over at night everything had to be picked up and packed, in readiness for the expressman to cart it to the railroad station. As soon as the properties were taken care of it was the scenery that had to be got ready for shipment. It was generally one or two in the morning when Charlie and Billy turned in for their well-earned rest, and they had to be up again early to see that everything was got off all right.

Charlie had determined to make good, and Manager Rickaby was satisfied he was all right, especially as he paid him half what he would have been obliged to give an experienced man like Chips. Unger became a general favorite with

everybody in the company, except Chubb, the comedian, and Dudley Tripp, the leading man. They sneered at his efforts to please, and took care to put as much work as they could in his way. Then they found all the fault they could with him, and were continually kicking to the stage manager because he did not do this or that thing to their satisfaction. Briggs, however, knew Unger was doing even more than his duty called for, and consequently he had more words of praise than blame for the young master of properties. Of course Charlie and Estelle Vance, who were the best of friends, and sought many opportunities to be in each other's company.

"Say, Charlie," remarked Billy, one afternoon when they had finished setting the stage for the first act of that night's performance in a small town down on the map as Middleburg, "Dudley Tripp is getting pretty sweet on Miss Vance, don't you think?"

"Ho! What of it? She doesn't care anything for him," replied Unger confidently.

"I should hope not," answered Billy, diving into his pocket for a cigarette. "He puts on altogether too many airs to suit me. It's get off the earth when he's about. I wonder he's so chummy with Chubb."

"I don't wonder. They're birds of a feather."

"They're a pair of knockers, that's what they are," said Billy, nodding his head and then striking a match on the sole of his shoe.

"They're that, all right. Chubb, for instance, is dead sore on Jenkins, because Jenkins does a stronger specialty than he. It catches on everywhere, and Chubb is jealous."

"I know. I heard him running Jenkins down to Briggs yesterday."

"It doesn't do him any good. Briggs has a level head and knows what's what. He knows Jenkins can put it all over Chubb and not turn a hair. He's the finest Dutch comedian I ever saw."

"Yep. He's a good one. However, to get back at what I started with. Dudley Tripp is pretty fresh with Miss Vance, and if I was you I'd keep an eye on him. You are her particular friend, and I don't think you'll stand to have her annoyed by that dude."

"I should say not," replied Charlie resolutely. "Estelle Vance is one of the nicest little girls in the world—too nice to be knocking around the country on one-night stands. Her place is with a good city stock, or with some reliable company playing the larger towns."

"She'll get there in time," observed Billy, crunching the butt of his cigarette under his heel.

The boys left by the stage door together, and strolled up the main street toward the hotel. Dudley Tripp came out of a barber shop just ahead of them, and turned in the same direction they were going. Manager Rickaby insisted that all his people should be good dressers, but Mr. Tripp carried the mandate to the extreme. He was a good-looking fellow, with light curly hair, and his appearance on the street usually raised something of a flutter among the young ladies of the town who chanced to catch sight of him. Dudley had an exalted opinion of himself. He posed as a sort of "matinee idol, and was much

given to mashing—an indiscretion that Manager Rickaby set his face against. On this occasion Dudley walked up Main street, swinging a little rattan cane and smoking a choice cigar, looking for all the world as if he owned the town. Not far ahead was a music and stationery store, in the window of which the advance man had secured the privilege of exhibiting a series of photographs of the members of the "Metropolitan Stock Company," and a couple of striking scenes from "Fighting Fate."

Two young ladies, one of whom, a lovely brunette, was the daughter of the mayor of the town, came out of the store just as Dudley Tripp came abreast of it. They stopped to look at the photographs, and the actor, much impressed by the beauty of the dark girl, stepped up alongside of them.

"Isn't he handsome?" exclaimed the mayor's daughter to her companion, pointing to the photo of Tripp, which, with that of Estelle Vance, occupied the center of the frame.

"Yes, but isn't Miss Vance just too lovely for anything?" remarked the other young lady, enthusiastically.

"I am glad you admire the photos, young ladies," spoke up Dudley, with a smirk of gratification.

The girls looked at the speaker in startled surprise. Dudley raised his hat politely.

"I am one of the——" he continued, with his most fascinating smile, when the dark beauty cut him short.

"I think you are very impertinent, sir," she said icily, with an indignant flash in her handsome eyes.

Dudley was rather taken aback, as he was not accustomed to being rebuffed in so decided a way by the fair sex; but his nerve was equal to the occasion.

"I beg your pardon, miss. No offense was intended. You pass a complimentary remark on my photograph—that's my picture next to Miss Vance's—and I was going to offer you a couple of passes for to-night's show. I hope you will accept them," producing two slips of paper marked "admit one," and signed by Manager Rickaby. "It will give me the greatest pleasure if you will——"

The mayor's daughter turned her back squarely on the leading man, and seizing her friend by the arm, walked away, leaving the handsome actor dumbfounded. Charlie and Billy witnessed Tripp's discomfiture, and were much amused. Billy was so tickled that he laughed out aloud. Tripp heard him and turned around.

"What are you laughing at, you little monkey?" he exclaimed, angrily, recognizing the pair.

"Nothing," retorted Billy, saucily.

Dudley reached forward, caught him by the ear, jerked him forward, and gave him a slap on the face.

"There; how do you like that?"

"What did you do that for?" cried Billy, mad as a hornet, kicking out and landing on the actor's shins.

"You villain!" roared Dudley, making a dash at the boy.

But Charlie interfered.

"Leave him alone," he said, coolly.

"How dare you put your ear in, you whipper-snapper!" cried Tripp, furiously.

He gave Unger a push.

"Don't you do that again, Mr. Tripp," said Charlie, resolutely.

"What's that?"

"I said, don't you put your hands on me that way again."

"I'll knock the stuffing out of you, you measly little puppy," gritted the leading man, in a rage, aiming a blow at the young master of properties.

The boy ducked and then struck out himself. His hard fist caught Dudley under the ear. The actor staggered and then fell to the sidewalk.

"Come on, Billy," said Charlie, quietly, "let's go on. This affair is attracting attention."

"I'd like to punch him in the eye myself," muttered his assistant, as the two moved away.

The two young ladies had paused a little distance away, and observed the proceedings with quiet satisfaction. Charlie raised his hat to them, and was passing on, when the dark girl spoke:

"You treated him to what he deserved, and I am very much obliged to you."

"He certainly had no right to address you, miss," he answered, politely. "I am sorry to say he is a member of our company, and I hope you will permit me to apologize for him."

"Are you an actor, too?" she asked, smilingly.

"Hardly that, though I play a small part in the piece. I am the property man of the company."

"Property man?" she exclaimed, in some perplexity. "May I ask what——?"

"Certainly," replied Charlie, courteously, and he proceeded to explain in a general way what his duties were.

"You are very kind, and much more of a gentleman than that other person."

"Thank you, miss. I hope you will come to the show this evening. It is a good one."

"I think I will ask my father to take me," she replied, with a smile. "He is the mayor of this town——"

"Then I've had the honor of talking to——"

"Miss Jennie Ripley. Allow me to introduce my friend, Miss Bates."

"Pleased to make your acquaintance, Miss Bates; and you, too, Miss Ripley. This is my friend, William Duane. He is also connected with the show."

"But you haven't told me your name," Miss Ripley said, laughingly.

"Charles Unger."

"Thank you. I will look for you on the program if I attend the performance this evening. I hope you won't get into trouble because you knocked that presuming fellow down."

"I'm not worrying about it, Miss Ripley. Here is our hotel, so I wish you good-afternoon, ladies," and the two boys raised their hats and left them.

"Isn't he a nice boy!" Charlie heard the mayor's daughter remark to her friend as they passed on.

Dudley Tripp and Chubb got their heads together and put up a job on Charlie, to be carried out at the night performance. But, as it

happened, Charlie suspected the two rascals, and succeeded in overhearing them talking over the plot and determined to outwit them at it. It was a diabolical scheme which the villains contemplated.

CHAPTER VI.—Which Shows How the Conspiracy Failed.

There was a good house that night, and the first and second acts of "Fighting Fate" went off as smooth as silk. The third act represented a rural landscape, with a set cottage at R. S. E., and a high bridge at back of stage, crossing from set rocks at U. E. R. and L. As soon as the curtain had fallen on the climax of Act II, Charlie dropped his prompt book and rushed out on the stage, where he found Billy already removing the chairs and tables (furnished by the theatre) used in the interior scene just finished. As soon as the stage had been cleared, and a couple of stage hands had hauled up the interior back scene, revealing the landscape backing, and were substituting foliage wings for the interior dittos, Charlie and Billy ran out the cottage piece with its practicable door, and began to brace it to the stage with iron clamps. This finished, they set the rock pieces and braced them opened out the hinged bridge supports, and placed thereon the framework of the rustic bridge, the railing of which opened on hinges.

Everything was clamped into place, so as to make it perfectly solid in appearance and safe to cross upon. The steadiness of the bridge depended on the double braces clamped to the stage behind the set rock pieces, and which held them upright. There was other work for the boys to do before the curtain was rung up on the third act, but Charlie made it a rule to inspect the bridge a moment or so before he went to his post in the right proscenium entrance, where the prompter's shelf stood, and above which was the brass hook attached to the curtain signal wire. Charlie was standing with his back to the curtain, looking over the scene to see that everything was properly arranged, when Briggs poked his head out of the wings and said:

"Ring up, Charlie."

Unger immediately ran up to the bridge, tested the clamps, and, finding everything all right, darted back to his post and gave the first warning pull to the curtain gong, following it immediately with two jerks, when the curtain-man began to wind the rope on the windlass, and the "drop" rose on an empty stage. Tillie Jacobs, the singing and dancing soubrette, made her entrance from the cottage, and Douglas Barnum, heavy man, presently came on from L. S. E. They had a scene together, and while they were speaking their lines Chubb joined Dudley Tripp at L. U. E. and handed him a monkey-wrench, which he took from under his costume. The two actors looked cautiously around them, but just then there was nobody near the upper entrances, which were close to the brick wall constituting the back of the theatre.

Apparently satisfied that they were unobserved, Dudley, while Chubb kept watch, began to unscrew the bolts holding the clamps attached

to the braces which kept the big set rock at L. U. E. in place. He worked quickly and deftly, and soon had the four bolts in his hand. He passed them with the wrench over to Chubb, who put the bolts in his pocket and shoved the wrench out of sight behind the corner of the back scene cloth. Then he pushed the braces which worked on hinges, quite close to the framework of the painted rock. Dudley did not propose to touch the opposite rock, as Jenkins made his entrance from that side, and his "business" called for a quick, jerky dash over the bridge.

The moment the Dutch comedian passed the center of the span his weight would be brought to bear on framework which had been tampered with. The set-piece would yield at once to the strain, fall backward, the end of the bridge would go down with a crash, and poor Jenkins would take a header through the upper entrance, at the imminent risk of a broken neck or broken bones. It was a dastardly scheme. But the two jealous and disgruntled actors only cared to achieve their own mean ends, without any consideration for the damage incurred thereby. As they slipped away from the scene of their operations, a small human being came shooting down a rope which hung from the staging in the flies.

It was Billy Duane, who had been a silent witness above of the crooked work on the stage, and he landed squarely in L. U. E. He darted down to the O. P. proscenium entrance, where he saw Briggs standing talking to Howard Austin, the first juvenile.

"I want to speak to you a moment, Mr. Briggs," said the boy, in a low, hurried tone. The stage manager saw by the lad's face that something was in the wind, and he said:

"Well, what is it, Billy?"

"I want you to come with me, sir."

Billy piloted him to L. U. E. Chubb and Dudley Tripp were carelessly conversing in L. S. E., and paid no attention to them.

"Look here, Mr. Briggs," said Duane, pointing to the condition of the set rock. "If Jenkins was to cross the bridge now what would happen?"

Briggs looked and a frown gathered on his brow.

"How comes it in this shape?" he asked sternly. "Is this the way Charlie and you attend to business?"

"If we bungled things that way, you don't suppose I'd come and point it out to you, do you?"

"I don't know what you're getting at, Billy; but one thing is certain—you've got to fix it right away. Why, Jenkins might break his neck the way that rock is standing."

"Sure he would. It was fixed on purpose so he would get a nasty fall, and Charlie and I would get blamed for it."

"Fixed! What do you mean? Has any one touched those braces since you put them in place, as it was your business and Charlie's to do?"

"Yes, sir."

Briggs looked hard at the boy. That such an uncalled-for and reckless thing should be done by any one who had access to the stage seemed incredible. It was a nasty piece of business, and Briggs was getting hot under the collar.

"Tell me what you know about it," he said, sharply.

Without referring to the conversation he had overheard in the cellar, Billy said he happened to be up in the flies, and, looking down, saw Dudley Tripp and Chubb remove the bolts from the clamps.

"I guess Chubb has the bolts in his pockets yet, and I know he put the wrench behind this cloth."

Billy pulled aside the end of the back scene, and there, sure enough, in the narrow space between the roller and the brick wall lay the monkey-wrench. Just then Billy's sharp eyes observed Chubb disappear behind a framed bit of scenery tilted against the side wall of the theatre.

"Chubb has walked under that garden-piece just now, Mr. Briggs. I'll bet he's gone there to get rid of those bolts."

Briggs, without a word, darted over and looked into the space between the wall and the set-piece. Chubb had his back to him and was pulling the bolts out of his pocket and laying them on the floor. The guilt of the comedian was beyond dispute, and Briggs, with a roar of anger, reached his arm in, hooked Chubb by the collar, and dragged him out. Two of the bolts were still in his hand. What he said to the startled actor as he glared fiercely down at him would not bear repetition in print. Stage managers have the habit of expressing themselves pretty forcibly when things aren't coming their way, as many an actor and actress can testify; but when they are up against such a crooked game as Chubb and Tripp were engaged in, well—there ain't any words in the English language too strong to express their sentiments.

Dudley Tripp, Howard Austin, Jenkins and Mrs. Benson, who played old woman parts, were attracted to the scene by the disturbance. Chubb was livid and trembling with fear.

"What's the trouble, Briggs?" asked Jenkins, in great surprise.

"Trouble!" rasped the stage manager, holding up the low comedian by the neck, in spite of his squirming. "Go and look at what this skunk and Mr. Tripp have been doing in the bridge entrance. Then, if you want to knock the head off both of them, you've got my permission to do so."

"What's this you're saying about me?" demanded Dudley Tripp, loftily, as Billy took the Dutch comedian by the arm and marched him to where the set-piece had been tampered with.

"You're a pretty individual to call yourself a respectable actor," replied Briggs, scornfully. "You—well, if I told you what I thought of you it would make your fur fly. It's a wonder you dare look me in the face."

"Pardon me, Mr. Briggs, but your insinuations are positively insulting," replied Dudley, with perfect composure.

"Are they? Well, let me tell you that you're an infernal scoundrel!"

"Sir! I shall report your language to Mr. Rickaby."

"After Mr. Rickaby hears what I have to say, with the proof to back it, I think you'll find it convenient to take your trunk and quit."

"Indeed!" sneered the leading man.

Bradley, who played a minor part, came up at this moment and said:

"You'll be wanted on the stage in a moment, Tripp."

"Thanks, Brad, old man," said Dudley, sauntering over to the entrance wing.

"Look at that," said Briggs, holding up one of Chubb's hands, the fingers of which still held two of the bolts which he had seemed too paralyzed to drop. "Look at those bolts. The skunk took them out of the clamps that secured the braces of this end of the bridge. His object was to seriously injure Jenkins, because," the stage manager jumped at the correct conclusion, "he's jealous of the hit Jenkins has made with the show. Go and hide your head till you are wanted," he exclaimed, snatching the bolts away and giving the comedian a push.

Then he got the other bolts behind the garden-piece, carried them to where Billy was enlightening Jenkins as to the situation, and told the boy to refix the braces. Jenkins, when he understood the affair, was a mighty angry actor, and swore he'd take it out of Chubb's hide after the show. The other members of the company were so surprised at the developments that they were not convinced of the guilt of Chubb and Tripp until Billy told them his story at the end of the act. After that the comedian and the leading man were studiously avoided off the stage for the rest of the night. Billy told Charlie about the matter while they were clearing the stage and setting the next act, which was easy. Unger was almost paralyzed.

"We'd been in a terrible scrape if you hadn't discovered their game," said Charlie, indignantly.

"I'll bet we would. Briggs would have believed we were careless, and hadn't bolted down those braces at all."

"I might have got fired."

"You'd have stood a good chance of it."

That night, after the show, Briggs told Mr. Rickaby. The result was Chubb and Tripp received notice to quit, and the manager telegraphed to town for two people to take their places.

CHAPTER VII.—How Charlie Unger Falls Into the Hands of Dudley Tripp and Chubb.

"I guess your nose is out of joint, Charlie," remarked Billy, one day, with a grin, while they were hauling the trunks into the different dressing-rooms.

"How is that?"

"Why, Miss Vance seems to have taken a great shine to Frank Frost, our new leading man."

"Well, he's a nice fellow, all right," replied Charlie, in a resigned tone.

"He's a good actor, and he plays the B-flat cornet in the band to the queen's taste," said Billy, admiringly.

"The Metropolitan Stock Company" had been out about six weeks, and had played to very fair business since it left town. So far the company had laid off only one day, being unable to get time for a certain night within its radius of operation, for Manager Rickaby didn't care to take the chances of a long jump. They were now in Sayville, which boasted two temples of

amusement—the Opera House and Burt's Theatre. "The Metropolitan Stock" was to show in Burt's that night; but as the advance sale had been pretty slim, owing to the superior features offered by the rival attraction at the Opera House, Manager Rickaby feared he would have a poor house. On their way back to the hotel Charlie and Billy passed the stage door to the Opera House. Two men came out and walked on ahead of them.

"Well," gasped Duane, clutching his companion by the arm, "if there aren't Chub and Dudley Tripp, I'm a liar!"

"I guess you're right, Billy. They must have got an engagement with the company that is playing the house."

"Looks that way, doesn't it? I s'pose we'll meet 'em at the hotel."

"Maybe they're not stopping at the Winston House."

"Must be. All the profesh put up there."

"We don't have to notice them."

"Well, I should say not."

"They're lucky chaps to catch on with that show. I hear it's a good one."

"It's good enough to get on without a band."

"Where does it hail from? Did you hear?"

"Chicago. Been out two months."

Chubb and Tripp are bound to crow over our people since they've got on to such a good thing."

"Sure they will. It's like 'em to do just that."

Manager Rickaby's fears were verified. There was a very thin house at Burt's Theatre that evening, while, on the contrary, the Opera House was packed to the doors. To make matters worse, the manager of the opposition was an old business rival of Rickaby's. Therefore, the head of the "Metropolitan Stock Company" felt decidedly sore when he counted the house that night, after a report of his opponent's success had been brought him. It was the poorest business the actors had played to since they left town, and it had a depressing effect on all hands.

After the show the performers resumed their street attire, packed their trunks, and returned to their hotel, leaving Charlie and Billy, as usual, to attend to the scenery and other property of the company. Owing to the fact that the theatrical expressman had certain arrangements with the opposition company, Charlie found that the scenery, trunks, etc., would have to be shipped to the depot that night, and this meant an hour's extra labor for him and his assistant before they could hope to get to bed. They worked like a pair of beavers, however, and with the assistance of the theatre stage hands, who gave a generous lift, they got the stuff out of the house much sooner than they had expected. While they were putting the last of the scenery on the truck, Charlie was astonished by the appearance of Estelle Vance at the stage door. She was somewhat excited and out of breath.

"Why, Miss Vance, what has brought you back?" he asked her in surprise.

"I'm so glad," she said, with a little gasp, "that I've got here before you were gone, for we leave early in the morning, and I was afraid I shouldn't get another chance."

"Another chance for what?" asked Charlie, wonderingly.

"To go back to my dressing-room."

"Why do you want to go back there?"

"I left a ring that I prize very much—it was my mother's on the shelf in front of the mirror. I must get it."

"Well, it's all dark upstairs. If you'll wait a minute I'll go up with you."

"Oh, it isn't necessary to trouble you. I'll take the watchman's lantern. I know the way, all right. I'll be down in a minute."

"Well, I'll meet you on the stage at the foot of the stairs," replied the boy, as the little actress seized the lantern from the shelf in the door-keeper's box and tripped off into the dark and silent theatre. Her only guide was a dim wired gas-jet at the end of the passage leading to the stage, and another near the stairway which led to the ladies' dressing-rooms located up in the region of the flies.

"You go on with the truck, Billy," directed the young master of properties. "I've got to see Miss Vance back to the hotel."

"All right," returned his assistant, cheerfully, as the last set-piece was put on the wagon and roped down to keep it in place. Then the wagon drove off. The watchman recharged his pipe and sat on his stool to wait for Charlie, who had started back into the building, to return with Estelle. At that moment two smoothly shaven men, one tall and the other short, walked in at the stage door, and as the watchman started to accost them they pounced upon him, bound and gagged him, and, pushing him into a corner of his little den, darted off down the passage toward the stage.

"We're in great luck," said the short man, whose voice was that of Chubb, the comedian. "I was beginning to be afraid we should not be able to bag our game. Instead of going with the truck he came back in here. Must have forgotten something. At any rate, he's played right into our hands."

"That's what he has," replied his companion, Dudley Tripp.

"I wonder where he is," breathed Chubb, when they entered on the dark stage.

"We'll wait here till he starts to go out."

"I hear him moving about behind the wings. We'd better tackle him at once."

"All right," agreed Tripp, and they started forward.

Charlie heard them coming, and, thinking it was the watchman he called out:

"Is that you, Barney?"

There was no reply, but still the footsteps—and he noticed there were more than one pair of feet—advanced.

"Who's there?"

Still no answer. Charlie left his position at the foot of the stairway, where he had been impatiently awaiting Miss Vance's return, and walked to the wings. Before he had any idea what was going to happen he was seized, an uncorked bottle pressed under his nose, and he found himself for the instant helpless. A subtle essence ascended into his nostrils, and his head began to swim. He couldn't recognize his assailants, but a sense of danger caused him to make a desperate struggle to throw the men off. He

was a strange boy, and very determined when aroused. The men did not expect to find him so hard to manage, and in the struggle the bottle was dashed to the floor and smashed.

"Confusion!" exclaimed Dudley Tripp. "The bottle is gone!"

Charlie knew his voice in a moment.

"Dudley Tripp!" he exclaimed, "what is the meaning of this?"

"Ha! You know me, eh?" cried the actor, in some vexation. "Well, it doesn't matter. We'll fix you, anyway, in a couple of minutes, so you won't cross our path again, I promise you."

Charlie pushed Dudley from him and started for the stairs, to find out what had become of Estelle, with Tripp pursuing him. Tripp caught hold of Charlie's trousers leg and pulled, and one of the wings fell over and came in contact with a gasjet and in an instant there was a conflagration. Tripp gave a final pull at Unger's legs, pulling him clear of Chubb, who then came crawling out of the mass of fractured wood and canvas.

Charlie jumped up and rushed up the stairs into the girl's dressing room, took up the girl's half-suffocated form, and rushed to a window overlooking the street. Then he fell limply across the window sill.

CHAPTER VIII.—Charlie and Estelle Vance Escape With Their Lives.

A hoarse shout of surprise and consternation went up from the mob of people whom the fire had, in spite of the lateness of the hour, collected around the scene of the conflagration, when the clang of the iron shutters near the top of the brick wall disclosed the fact that there was a human being in the burning theater. The flames then were rising high above the roof of the building, lighting up the neighborhood around about and casting a lurid glow into the heavens that could be seen miles away. The fire-engines were now arriving on the scene, and the policemen were beginning to drive the early arrivals back to where a fire line would be established.

The occupants of the house opposite, mostly floors let out to the workmen of an adjacent factory, were in a state of terror and confusion.

Some of them were looking at the blaze from the windows and the roofs, but the women were scurrying around inside gathering up their trinkets and valuables in preparation for speedy departure if that became necessary. Charlie Unger breathed the pure air into his lungs and soon recovered his coolness, which was second nature with him in the face of danger. He stooped down, lifted Estelle in his arms, and laid her face down across the window-sill. The crowd, which had become still after that first outburst, and was watching his every action with the liveliest interest and anxiety, now roared again when they saw that another person, and a woman at that, was up there in the doomed building. Every window in the apartments of the opposite houses were peopled at once. Women gazed at the imperiled pair, and turned faint, while ejaculations of pity and horror were to be heard on every side.

"They're lost!"

"Merciful heaven, have pity on them!"

"Must they perish in that dreadful manner?"

"Is there no way to save them?"

These were some of the words that fell from ashen and trembling lips of both the men and women eyewitnesses. Some shouted for the hose, others for ladders; others still, for ropes. The hook and ladder company had arrived, and ladders were being brought, but no single ladder would reach the imperiled ones, so the firemen set about joining them. Firemen also appeared on the roofs of the adjoining buildings with hose and axes and pikes.

The boy was thankful that Estelle was not conscious of her awful position. The heat was now growing almost unbearable around him. The flames were creeping toward him over the floor and on the beams above, as if eager for the prey that seemed unable to elude their blighting touch. At this exciting point some men, who had been cool and wide-awake to the situation, appeared on the roof opposite with a long ladder. The window where Charlie and his helpless friend were lay on a level with the roof. The street was a narrow one, and the would-be rescuers, after measuring the intervening space with their eyes, calculated the ladder was long enough to span the gulf between.

So, with plenty of help at their back, they shoved the ladder out, with a rope attached to the forward end, which they managed to toss to the firemen on the roof next to the theatre. The crowd of spectators, perceiving their object, raised a great cry of satisfaction, and then became quiet and anxious once more. A fireman backed up against the side wall of the theatre, another climbed on his shoulders, and a third was boosted up till he managed to shin up the body of the second man and pulled himself on top of the blazing building. The rope attached to the end of the ladder was thrown to him. He carried it around to a point above the window where Charlie stood, and then yelled to the men with the ladder to haul it back and cast off the rope. They obeyed, and the rope fell against the theatre wall, and within reach of Unger, as a second fireman joined his comrade on the roof.

It seemed now as if the rescue would be effected, and another roar of satisfaction and encouragement rose from the crowd at both ends of the street. As Charley reached for the rope a tremendous cloud of thick smoke came rolling out of the window, hiding him from the view of everybody. As it floated away partially it was seen that the boy and the young woman had disappeared, and in their places came a lurid sheet of flame, which lapped up the window frames, sills, and every inch of the woodwork, the crackling glass falling to the pavement in a shower of glittering fragments. A groan of horror came from the crowd.

"They are gone!"

Women covered their faces with their hands and wept. The excitement was intense, and above it all came the roaring of the steamers at the corners, as they forced the water through the hose, and the swish of the streams as they struck and played upon the blazing window where a moment before two human lives had

mutely appealed for help. Clang! Bang! Another pair of shutters had opened further along the building, and Charlie appeared again before the public view. A cheer of intense relief rang out upon the night air. The crowd was thrilled with delight and satisfaction at his providential escape. Now it was seen that the girl had recovered her senses. She was clinging to Unger, as though terrified at her perilous position. The firemen on the roof made their way slowly forward so as to take up their position above the other window.

"Brace up, Miss Vance!" said Charlie, in a voice of encouragement. "The firemen are on the roof and will soon have you out by means of a rope."

"Oh, it is dreadful!" she cried, shivering like a leaf.

"Yes, it's pretty tough. But I'm satisfied if I get you out of it all right. Here comes the rope!"

He grabbed it, wound it twice about the girl's waist and knotted it securely.

"Now hold on tight!" he said; and leaning out of the window, gave the firemen the signal to haul up.

As the rope tightened he steadied her so that she swung clear all right. Then the big crowd roared its approval as the girl was drawn safely to the roof.

"I hope they'll hurry," muttered Unger. "The fire is getting awful close. This is my last chance. Phew! It's hot enough to roast an ax!"

Down came the rope again.

"Just in time!" he breathed, for the fire was burning the boards at his very feet, and as he finished attaching the rope under his arms his trousers caught, and the crowd could see the cloth burning as he was pulled up to safety.

The crowd cheered again, this time long and loud, for the flames had been cheated of their victims, who were being hurried from the burning roof by the firemen. Fifteen minutes later the roof fell in, and the flames and sparks rose a hundred feet into the air; but the two lives had been saved, and everybody was satisfied.

CHAPTER IX.—Charlie Is Slated For An Important Job.

"Oh, Charlie, how shall I ever thank you enough for saving me from that fearful fire?" cried Estelle Vance, half an hour later, when they sat in the parlor of the hotel, three o'clock in the morning though it was, and the boy had finished telling her how he had climbed the stairs to the "flies" in her behalf, and found her dead to all the world, as it were, upon the boards where she had fallen.

"I am sufficiently repaid in knowing that I did save you, in spite of the difficulties I had to encounter to do it."

"And you faced almost certain death just to save me?"

"Why not? Are you not worth it?"

"You brace—brave, unselfish boy!"

And then she impulsively threw her arms about his neck and kissed him twice upon the lips, and clung to him while she cried.

"And may I kiss you once?" he asked, wistfully.

"Why, of course you may. I shall love you as long as I live!"

Did he kiss her? Well, say—he forgot he had asked only one, and in his confusion he kissed her three times. He certainly had earned those kisses, for it had been touch and go with them both. Of course, Charlie was the hero of the company next day, and for many days after. Everybody had something nice to say to him.

Unger's statement to the town authorities of the attack made upon him in the theatre by Dudley Tripp and Chubb, as one of the causes which led to the destruction of Burt's theatre, resulted in the issuance of a warrant for the arrest of the two actors; but they, taking time by the forelock, skipped out of Sayville before morning, and their whereabouts could not be ascertained. When the company arrived at their next destination, about noon, the first thing Miss Vance did was to go to a jeweler's and buy him a nice little gold watch and chain. It took the biggest part of a week's salary, but what did that matter? Money had no value in comparison with her life, and the girl was truly grateful.

"You're all to the good, Charlie, old boy," said Billy, that afternoon. "I wouldn't have gone through what you did for a gold mine."

"I wasn't thinking of gold mines; I was thinking of Estelle Vance."

"You ought to marry her, to make things come out like they do in the story books."

"I wouldn't mind, one of these days, if I had the chance," replied Unger, thinking of the two kisses the girl had given him, not to speak of the three he had taken himself, and wondering how he had summoned up nerve enough to ask for them. "But I am afraid I am not in it. There is a big difference between a talented young leading woman and a common master of properties like myself."

"Ho! I don't know. You're as smart as they come, Charlie. You won't be a property man all your life, bet your boots. I expect to see you the manager of a show yet."

"That's what I'm aiming for. I'm picking up experience fast, thank goodness. I mean to get there just as quick as the law will allow."

"Well," grinned Billy, "if I get to be a manager, I guess it won't be any higher than a medicine show."

"How about an 'Uncle Tom's Cabin Combination?'" smiled Unger.

"That would suit me all right. I'd like to have Tillie Jacobs from Topsy."

"So you're sweet on Tillie?"

"Oh, I like her some. She's just my style, if you want to know."

"Tillie is a bright little girl."

"Bet your boots she is!"

"And a great friend of Estelle Vance's."

"So much the better. It would be fine if you and me married the two of 'em."

"Stranger things than that have happened, though I'm afraid there isn't much danger that we will connect in this case."

"It was mighty lucky we got the trunks and the other stuff out of the theatre before the fire."

"You're right, it was."

"If it hadn't been that the expressman couldn't

haul it next morning in time for the train, owing to his arrangements with the Chicago company, we should have been a busted show about this time, and en route for town."

Whether or not the fire was a bad omen, certain it is the company struck bad business in earnest after leaving Sayville. The show—a St. Louis aggregation—which filled the dates on the same route ahead of them took all the money in sight, leaving the pickings to Rickaby, and the pickings in question didn't amount to a row of beans.

"We're having a run of all-around hard luck," remarked Billy, as he and Unger were doing their usual stunt with the trunks and properties of the company in the small town of Sabine. "I was around in front, and heard the manager of the house tell Rickaby that they hadn't sold two seats in advance."

"That isn't encouraging. I'm afraid the 'ghost' will soon forget to come our way, which will be a pretty bad sign."

"I should snicker. Do you think that fire queered us?"

"Why shouldn't it?" asked Charlie, in surprise.

"That's Jenkins' opinion, and Barnum, the heavy man, agreed with him."

"All rot!"

"That's what I think. But the profesh is awful superstitious. Briggs carries a gold-mounted rabbit's foot in his pocket, and Rickaby has got some kind of fetich attached to his watch-chain. And don't say a word, Tillie Jacobs put her stockings on inside out by mistake, in her hurry to get dressed for breakfast, and I heard her tell Mrs. Benson it was bad luck to change 'em during the day."

"Then I suppose Tillie thinks the fire was a hoodoo?" grinned Charlie.

"That's what she does. She's sure of it."

"Now I know why Chubb had a horseshoe nailed to his trunk. It was for luck."

"Sure it was. It didn't bring him much. He was so crooked that luck wouldn't stick to him even with Giant cement."

"I wonder if that four-leaved clover pendant on Miss Vance's watch-chain is a charm, too?"

"Cert. Just notice some time at the table if you see any of the company spill the salt. Whoever does it will take up the spilt grains and throw them over his right shoulder."

"What do they do that for?"

"To avoid a scrap with somebody. Salt spilt at table is a warning of a quarrel."

"I must have spilt some salt the day I had the run-in with Dudley Tripp," grinned Charlie, as he laid down his end of the last trunk.

"I'll bet you did," replied Billy, taking out a cigarette and lighting it.

When they reached the hotel they saw Manager Rickaby talking very earnestly with Stage Manager Briggs. Briggs motioned Unger to approach.

"Look here, Charlie," said Rickaby, "I'm thinking of giving you a new job."

"A new job!" exclaimed the boy, in some surprise.

"Yes. I've kept a line on you since you've been with the show, and am bound to say you're the hardest and most conscientious worker we have. You've kept your word to do your best,

and Briggs says you've kept it clear up to the handle, and even beyond. He says you're all to the good, and I agree with him. Now I'm in a hole, and I'm going to look to you to help pull me out of it."

"Well, if you think I can help you in any way, I'm ready to start in and——"

"Hustle, eh?"

"Though I think I've been doing that right along."

"So you have. That's why I think you may answer at a pinch to go ahead of the show as advance agent."

"Go ahead of the show, sir?" almost gasped Charlie.

"Yes."

"Where's Bulgin?"

"Taken down sick with pneumonia and set to the hospital in Salamanca. I want you to take his place till he gets on his pins again. You're a smart, bright boy, and a hustler from A to Z. Briggs and I will coach you right away as to your duties, and what you'll be up against. If you make good, maybe I'll keep you as my regular advance man, anyway, as I'm not particularly satisfied with Bulgin's work. How does this strike you?"

"It strikes me just about right, sir. I'm on the lookout to better myself, and I think I'll take to advance work like a duck to water," said the boy, enthusiastically.

"I hope you will. It'll put you ahead in the business."

"And so it was settled that Unger was to go ahead of the show, starting next morning for Salamanca, which Bulgin hadn't billed yet."

CHAPTER V.—Charlie Goes Ahead of the Show.

Mr. Rickaby took Charlie into an unoccupied corner of the reading-room of the hotel and proceeded to give him the benefit of his own many years' experience as an advance agent.

"You'll find what's left of Bulgin's outfit at the Spencer House in Salamanca," he continued, puffing away at his cigar. "His route book, memorandum agreements with managers, press notices to be inserted in the papers, complimentary passes, etc. Our paper you'll find at the express office. I will give you a written paper of general instructions, as you are liable to forget a part of my verbal ones. Of course, I can't tell you everything. A good deal will depend on your judgment. I want the towns thoroughly billed. In Salamanca there is a regular bill-posting firm, but in most of the small towns, where we have time, you'll find that the proprietor, or some one connected with the theatre, has the bill-posting privilege. Whoever it is, you'll have to arrange with him on the best terms you can make, leaving your signed order to collect on the night of the show. Get your lithos and photos into the most desirable stores. You ought to have some idea of their character, for you and Billy has collected the photo stands as we went along."

"Yes, sir," replied Charlie, promptly.

"Well, that's all. You can go and talk to Briggs now. He may be able to put you next

to some points I have overlooked. You will start out with the theory of advance work. It's up to you to round it out by experience. I think in time you will make a good advance man."

Briggs talked to him for half an hour, and then Charlie went in to supper. He found Billy waiting for him, for they always sat together at table. He found Billy waiting for him, for they always sat together at table.

"What's in the wind, old man?" asked Duane, curiously.

"Oh, nothing much," grinned Charlie, "except you are going to take my place as master of the properties."

"Take your place!" gasped Billy; "but what are you going to do?"

"I'm going ahead in Bulgin's place."

"You don't mean it!"

"I do mean it. Everything is arranged. I leave in the morning for Salamanca."

While they were eating, Charlie gave his friend an outline of the situation.

"I'm dead sorry to lose you, Charlie. I shall feel like a fish out of water. I don't know how I'm going to wrestle with the scenery and other stuff all by my lonesome."

"Briggs will arrange all that. You do your best. That's all than can be expected of you."

The members of the company, Estelle Vance in particular, expressed their regret at losing him.

"I feel as if I were parting from the only true friend I have," said the girl, soberly.

"Oh, you have Mr. Frost, you know," replied Charlie, with a little jealous pang.

"Mr. Frost is nothing to me, Charlie," she answered, earnestly.

"Then you really think a little something of me, do you, Estelle?"

"Of course I do," she said, with tears starting into her eyes. "You have saved my life twice in four months. Do you think I could for a moment be indifferent——"

"Estelle!" cried the boy, eagerly, as he took her hand in his, "do you know why I risked my life to save you from death in Burt's Theatre? It's because I think the world of you. I have learned to care for you as a dear sister—as more than a sister, even. I am only a boy yet, it is true, in years, but I feel like a man in energy, ambition and the will to succeed. It is also true that you are a year older than I. Will that be a bar to the hope I have of one day making you my wife?"

"Charlie!"

"I don't ask you to promise me now more than a fighting chance to win you. Give me that assurance and I shall go in and win out. When I am manager of a successful show, with you at the head of the cast, I want to marry you. I can't accomplish all that in a day, you know, and I am on the road to it now—I am going to succeed, mark my words, and I want you to share that success with me. Promise me you will give me the chance I ask for. That you will give me the opportunity to win you for myself."

The girl bent her head and murmured:

"Yes, Charlie. I promise."

On the following afternoon, Unger stopped off the east-bound express at the thriving town of Salamanca and went directly to the Spencer

House. He presented Manager Rickaby's letter to the proprietor of the hotel and was put in possession of Bulgin's effects. He took charge of all the Company's property, and the advance man's personal duds he locked up in his grip and sent to the hospital authorities, with a request to deliver it to Bulgin when that gentleman was discharged cured.

He made all necessary arrangements for the company, filling out a contract in duplicate and substituting his own name for William Bulgin's printed at the head of the paper. The manager was to furnish the Opera-house (heated, lighted and cleaned), the license, orchestra, stage men, ushers, stage furniture, bill posting, newspaper advertisements, ticket-sellers, special police, reserved seat tickets, house programs, etc. A copy of the above memorandum agreement Charlie mailed to Mr. Rickaby, together with a memo. of the agreement with the hotel men, and such other information as he deemed necessary to communicate to the manager of the company. He found a C. O. D. package at the express office, containing the paper to be billed and otherwise distributed, and had it sent to the theatre.

He hired a light rig and toured the town, putting out his lithographs, and in certain prominent stores, where he obtained permission, the photo stands. In every case he left one or more complimentary tickets as payment for the privilege extended. Then he visited the local paper offices and put it up to the editors in his most winning way, furnishing them with proofs of notices. He took occasion to call their attention to the beauty and great histrionic ability of Estelle Vance, and dwelt upon her recent wonderful escape from death in the burning theatre of Sayville, and he did not forget to ring in the curtain incident at the Metropolitan in town, but, of course, his own connection with the affair was kept strictly in the background.

"'Fighting Fate,'" he said, glibly, "is the greatest melodrama on the road. It is full of thrilling situations and climaxes, and its comedy element is the best ever. There are specialties in it to burn, and we carry a carload of special scenery painted expressly for this mammoth production."

Charlie, on his own responsibility, had a transparency painted, on which the name of the play and Miss Vance were specially featured. He made an arrangement with an expressman to tour the main streets of the town with the transparency illuminated, on the two nights which intervened before the company arrived, and gave him an order on Rickaby for his money. He also put into practise several other original devices of his own for arousing public attention to his show, and when he finally shook the dust of Salamanca from his shoes he was satisfied he had acquitted himself as well as could reasonably be expected of one as inexperienced in the business as himself. At any rate, he found there was no kick coming after the company had played the town, for they had the first bang-up house—the standing room only sign being displayed at the door a few minutes before eight—they had had in two weeks. In fact, Charlie received a brief congratulatory telegram from Manager Rickaby which concluded with the words: "You're all to the good."

CHAPTER XI.—Dudley Tripp and Chubb Bob Up Serenely.

One morning Charlie Unger arrived at a large town called Phalanx. He registered at the leading hotel and had breakfast. Then he started out to do business. The first thing he wanted to know was what kind of a show immediately preceded his own company. The Opera-house was only a block away, but before he reached it he noticed a familiar lithograph in a music store window, and it didn't make him feel any too good to find that he was up against the St. Louis aggregation once more. That company, which was presenting a musical farce called "A Hot Old Time," played the town on the following evening, then night before the Metropolitan Stock Company was to appear in "Fighting Fate." It had been Rickaby's experience, so far, that wherever the St. Louis combination cut in immediately ahead of him he came in for the short end of the receipts.

In fact, "A Hot Old Time," with its skirt dancers, song-and-dance artists, and utterly ridiculous situation, had almost done up the legitimate melodrama of "Fighting Fate." Charlie had ascribed a good deal of his luck in landing good houses for his manager to the fact that their dates, since striking Salamanca, did not bring them into competition with their winning rival.

"By George!" he ejaculated, as he stood and gazed at the obnoxious bill, which represented a dashing young woman in rainbow-tinted skirts about on the points of her toes, with the legend in big letters, "Dottie Dimple in 'A Hot Old Time.'" "I'm up against it at last. This show is making a raft of money, while we are scratching hard to make ends meet. 'A Hot Old Time' seems to leave a frost in its wake, Bulgin couldn't make any headway against it, and Bulgin is an experienced advance man, while I—oh, well, I'm not going to get discouraged at the first real snag I find in my way. The St. Louis company has the rights to the billboards until nine o'clock to-morrow night; that'll give us just twenty-four hours' billing, but I can get my lithos, photos and small printing out, anyway, also my newspaper advertising and notices into the papers. The great trouble is the people appear to take kindly to this vaudeville rot. Probably it's the first thing of the kind that's been through this section for some time, and it draws as a novelty. They don't know what they miss when they turn down 'Fighting Fate.'"

So Charlie got a move on. He called on the local manager first thing and made his arrangements. Then he got his paper from the express office and sent the posters to the man who did the bill sticking, who promised to set his two men at work at nine o'clock next night. By the time he had made the rounds of the newspapers and looked in at a number of places to see that the man employed distributing his quarter-sheet hangers and other small bills was attending to his work properly, it was time for him to return to the hotel for lunch. It took him the larger part of the afternoon to get his window advertising about town, and he found he could get his lithos in stores that wouldn't stand for the

pictures of "A Hot Old Time." Bulgin had secured the same advantage, but it didn't offset to any extent the success reaped by the St. Louis show.

"I wish I could think of some way to take the wind out of the sails of this farce-comedy. It has had the inner track of us long enough, and it would be a big feather in my hat if I could fix things so as to draw a good house for Rickaby on top of 'A Hot Old Time.'"

So interested was he in the idea of doing up the opposition show if he could that he failed to notice two persons approaching along the sidewalk, until he actually butted into them.

"What in thunder do you mean, fellow!" exclaimed a voice, which sounded familiar to him.

"Yes, can't you look where you are walking?" cried the other man, angrily.

Then, as Charlie looked up, and began an apology, which as he recognized Dudley Tripp and Chubb, the comedian, froze on his lips, the two actors simultaneously uttered exclamations of surprise and perhaps dismay.

"You here!" said the former leading man of the Metropolitan Stock Company.

"Yes. And I see you're here, too—you and Mr. Chubb," replied Unger, coolly.

"Sure we are," remarked the comedian, with a ghastly grin.

"What are you doing in Phalanx?" asked Dudley, with a frown. "Rickaby's barnstomers aren't in town. Has the combination gone up salt river?"

"I might also ask what you two are doing in Phalanx," retorted the boy, without noticing the sneering innuendo.

"Oh, it's a free country," answered Chubb, flippantly, taking out a pack of cigarettes and selecting one. "Have a coffin nail?" proffering his bunch.

"Thank you, I don't smoke," replied Unger, coldly.

"Oh, don't you?" carelessly.

"I'd like to know what you gentlemen have to say for yourselves after that rough-house game you worked on me in the theatre at Sayville, and which ended in the destruction of the play-house?" asked Charlie, in a stern tone.

The two actors looked at each other uneasily.

"That was only a little joke on our part, Unger," said Dudley, with assumed cordiality.

"That's right," chipped in Chubb, glibly. "You queered us with Rickaby, you know, and Dud and I thought we'd give you the razzle-dazzle—kind of scare you. We didn't intend to hurt you."

"It looked to me like a pretty serious kind of joke. At any rate it turned out to be so. Why didn't you stay and face the music if you didn't mean any harm?"

"Face what music?" sneered Dudley.

"There was an investigation into the cause of the fire. You two couldn't be found, and so there were warrants issued for your arrest. If you ever go back to Sayville they will be served on you."

"Oh, we shan't go back," grinned the comedian.

"But you're still in the State. If the Sayville authorities knew you were in Phalanx they'd have you detained till they could send after you."

The actors looked a bit uneasy at hearing this.

"They won't know we're here unless you——"

"What do we care?" interrupted Chubb. "We won't be in town fifteen minutes from now. Come on, Dud, let's be moving. Ta-ta, Unger! We'll sell you later."

Chubb hailed an electric car, which Charlie saw bore the name of a neighboring town—Dundee—and the two rascals were soon speeding away.

"I wonder what they're doing in this neighborhood," mused the boy. "They must have joined a show that probably is playing in Dundee to-night. Well, as long as they let me alone I shan't bother them."

Charlie went on to the hotel and wrote a couple of letters. After that he spent half an hour cudgeling his brains for some scheme to get the better of the St. Louis combination, but he couldn't think of anything worth while. He was first at the dinner table, as he intended to take the 5.55 accommodation for Pittston. While he was paying his bill he suddenly recollected he had forgotten to call the attention of the manager of the Opera-house to a certain important fact in connection with the play of "Fighting Fate." So he started off, grip in hand, to leave word at the box office. As he was about to enter the theatre a smart-looking, dapper-dressed man, who had been standing negligently at one side of the entrance, looked at him sharply, then stepped forward and intercepted him.

"You're Mr. Unger, I believe, advance agent for the Metropolitan Stock," extending his hand, with an insinuating smile.

"Yes, sir; you have the advantage of me," replied Charlie, pleasantly.

"Oh, I'm Sid Rex, of 'A Hot Old Time.' Glad to meet you. Come across the way and have a drink," and he linked his arm in Unger's.

"You'll have to excuse me. I don't drink."

"Don't drink, eh?" exclaimed Mr. Rex, in some astonishment. "Come, now, you're joking."

"No, sir; I'm not joking. I drink nothing stronger than water."

"Well, upon my word. You're the first man I've met in the business who didn't drink. You'll take a smoke, then?"

"I don't smoke, either."

Sid Rex stepped back and looked Charlie all over, much in the way he would have regarded a new species of animal.

"Say, young man, are you giving me straight goods, or is this one of your jokes?"

"I'm giving it to you as straight as I can. I neither drink nor smoke."

"And you are Rickaby's advance man? Well, say——"

A sudden racket on the street cut off what he was about to say. A carriage and a span of fine-looking horses came dashing around the corner. Two or three persons started out from the walk to intercept the flying team, but only succeeded in frightening the animals the more.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Charlie, excitedly, "there's a little girl in that rig!"

Realizing the importance of immediate action, he dropped his grip, broke away from Mr. Rex, and, springing into the street, seized one of the animals by its bridle as the team flashed by the Opera-house.

CHAPTER XII.—Charlie Makes A Powerful Friend and Receives A Startling Surprise.

Charlie had acted on the spur of the moment, thinking only of the danger which menaced the little girl. The risk he was facing in attempting, single-handed, to stay the course of a pair of high-spirited animals, frantic with excitement, did not occur to him; nor, if it had, would the brave boy have hesitated. It was a gallant act, and aroused the admiration of the bystanders and the people who stood in the stores and windows of the busiest street in Phalanx. Fortunately, Unger had secured a good grip upon the harness of the off horse, else he must have been thrown to the street and trampled on by the scared animals. As it was, their progress seemed in no wise checked, for they sprang forward at increased speed, dragging the nervy lad with them. For several moments his position was one of extreme peril, but he clung desperately to his hold on the off horse, his iron muscles being equal to the strain.

Then watching his chance, he made a flying leap to the animal's back. Seizing both bridles, he exerted all his strength and pulled their heads up and back. These tactics had the desired effect. The animals snorted, and reared wildly, but Charlie gave them no relief. The only thing he feared was that they might lose their feet and he would be thrown head first into the road. Fortunately this peril was avoided. The horses blundered on at a gradually decreasing speed, until brought up standing by pedestrians who rushed into the street and stopped them. Charlie dismounted, none the worse for his reckless ride, and began to pet and talk soothingly to the quivering steeds. The little girl sat, pale and frightened, in the carriage. A big crowd began to gather and stare at the rig, and make remarks about the wonderful sense of the child, as well as the courage of the boy who had averted a fatal smash-up.

"You've done a big thing, young man," remarked a bystander, admiringly. "You've saved the life of Ogden Burnett's little daughter. He's the mayor of this town, and the richest man in the county."

An electric car which had been racing down the street after the runaways came up at this moment and stopped. A stout, handsomely-dressed gentleman stepped quickly from the platform and began to force his way through the crowd, which immediately made way for him. He was intensely excited. Finally he reached the side of the carriage, and held out his arms to the little girl, who sprang up when she saw him, and jumped into his arms.

"My darling, you are not hurt, are you?"

"No, papa, but I'm dreadfully frightened."

"Of course you are. There, there, you're quite safe now."

"There is the boy who stopped the horses, papa," she said, pointing to Charlie, who was still patting the now almost calmed animals. "He did it all himself."

Mr. Burnett, leading his daughter by the hand, stepped up to Unger.

"Young man, I am deeply grateful to you for the service you have rendered my little ones. You

have probably saved her life. I would be pleased to know your name."

"Charles Unger, sir."

"Do you belong in Phalanx?"

"No, sir. I'm the advance agent of the Metropolitan Stock Company, which appears in the Opera-house in 'Fighting Fate,' Thursday evening," replied Charlie, thinking he might as well advertise the show while he was about it.

Ogden Burnett was a warm patron of the drama, and was not at all displeased, as some narrow-minded people might have been, to find himself under strong obligations to a member of the theatrical profession.

"Indeed! Then, of course, you are a stranger to our town. I beg you will permit me to offer you the hospitality of my home while you remain here. My name is Ogden Burnett. I am the mayor of Phalanx."

"I am pleased to know you, Mayor Burnett," said Charlie, lifting his hat respectfully. "I am much obliged for your kind invitation, but I am just on the point of leaving for Pittston by the 5.55 local."

"I'm afraid you have missed your train, as it is after six now. There's no other train for Pittston till the morning on this line; but if it is absolutely necessary for you to reach that town to-night I can drive you over to Hayward Junction, twelve miles from here, where I can have the Atlantic Express flagged for you, and arrange with the conductor to stop at Pittston and let you off."

"Never mind, sir. I'll wait for the eight o'clock local in the morning."

"Very well. Then, of course, you'll stay with us to-night?"

"Yes, sir, if you insist upon it."

"After what you have done for my little girl, and consequently for myself and wife, I certainly want you to accept my invitation. Let us go now. The horses are all right again. I cannot understand how they came to run away. They have never exhibited such a tendency before, though it is true they are spirited animals. Jump in, Mr. Unger."

Mayor Burnett lifted his daughter back into her old seat, got in himself, and drove off, the crowd giving him a rousing send-off. At Charlie's request they stopped at the Opera-house, and he rushed to the box office to ask if Mr. Rex had handed in his grip. He had done so, and the boy recovered it. Then he left the message he had called to deliver, and returned to the carriage. Mayor Burnett was the president of the Phalanx Carriage & Wagon Works, and was considered the richest man in the county—at any rate, he was the most important. He lived in a handsome mansion a mile outside of town, on the road to Dundee. Charlie had never before been in such a fine house, and he was somewhat overpowered by its quiet magnificence.

Mrs. Burnett, a cheerful, matronly little woman, who assumed no airs because of her exalted position, made Charlie welcome, and when she learned of his brave conduct in behalf of her only child, she could not do enough to testify her gratitude to the boy. Of course, Charlie had to have a second dinner, for the meal was waiting the return of the master of the house and little Miss Burnett. A butler and a maid

servant waited on table, and though it was an every-day meal, Unger thought it was the best he had ever been up against.

After dinner Ogden Burnett took Charlie into his library and asked him what he could do for him.

"I am under such great obligations to you, Mr. Unger, that I shall not feel satisfied unless you will permit me to offer you some substantial evidence of our appreciation of your courage and presence of mind, but for which we might to-night have been childless," said the rich man, with emotion.

"I couldn't think of accepting anything, Mr. Burnett, that would look like a reward for what I did. While I know I took a great risk to save your little child from injury, perhaps death, it was, of course, a voluntary act on my part, and the knowledge that I was successful is sufficient reward in itself."

"Since you refuse to accept anything for your great service, I hope you will at least look upon me as your friend."

"I shall be glad to do so, sir."

"I make one more stipulation, and that is, if I can help you any way, either in or out of your profession, you will promise to call upon me."

"I will agree to do that," said Charlie. "I am anxious to have a company of my own some day, and it is possible I might take advantage of your generous request if circumstances would seem to justify it."

"I shall feel much hurt if you do not. Now tell me something about yourself and your hopes and prospects."

Charlie had scarcely started his story before a couple of reporters from the two daily papers of Phalanx called to interview him in respect to the runaway. Unger, with an eye to business, told them that he hoped they would work in his connection with the Metropolitan Stock Company, that was to show in town on the next night but once, and he gave them a few pointers about the combination which were new to the press. After the gentlemen of the quill had departed, Charlie continued his story of his stage life, to which he added his ambitious determination to some day become the manager of a show himself.

"You certainly give every evidence of possessing the ability which goes to the front and stays there. When you feel that the time has come for you to branch out for yourself, if you lack the capital to put your enterprise before the public, communicate with me, and I will be your 'angel,' as I believe a theatrical backer is called," and Ogden Burnett smiled encouragingly.

"I thank you for your offer, sir, and will remember it," said Unger, secretly delighted, for with such a wealthy backer he felt sure he could carry a dramatic venture over the shoals on which so many poorly financed organizations go to pieces.

Mr. Burnett's coachman was ordered to drive Charlie to the station in the morning, and he got there in time to catch the 8.20 train. After billing Pittston, Charlie started for the town of Jackson. Here a startling surprise awaited him at the hotel. It was in the shape of a telegram,

which the clerk handed to him as soon as he had registered. Tearing it open, he read these words:

"Return to Phalanx. Manager Rickaby dead. Briggs."

CHAPTER XIII.—Call-Boy Charlie Becomes Manager Charles Unger.

"Rickaby dead!" gasped Charlie, leaning against the office counter for support, the shock was so sudden and startling.

It didn't seem possible the news could be true, for Manager Rickaby had always struck him as an uncommonly healthy man.

"I suppose it must be true," he breathed, after he had recovered his self-possession somewhat, "but I can't seem to realize it."

He went in and had his breakfast, then he inquired when he could catch a train for Phalanx.

"Half-past ten," answered the clerk.

"That will give me time to see the local manager and explain matters," said the boy to himself.

At two o'clock that afternoon he stepped off the train at Phalanx and made a bee-line for the hotel where the company was stopping. The first person he ran against was Briggs, the stage manager.

"Come in here, and I'll talk to you," said Briggs, drawing the boy into the reading-room. "Mr. Rickaby shot himself last night in Eleria."

"Shot himself!" exclaimed the boy, in pained surprise.

"Yes; in a gambling joint."

"Good gracious!"

"He was a confirmed gambler, but usually played in fair luck. Last night the weather was rotten, and we had a poor house. The same conditions held here in Phalanx, and the 'A Hot Old Time' struck the worst business they've been up against since they started out. Rickaby went off after we had settled with the local manager, and tried to recoup himself at a notorious place in Eleria. He was cleaned out to his last dollar. He woke me up at four this morning to tell me he guessed the company would have to disband and get back to town as best they could. It was raining like cats and dogs at that hour, and the newspaper reports of the afternoon before had indicated a continuance of bad weather, so the prospects of another poor night in this town was good. Rickaby handed me the tickets for this place, a circumstance which rather surprised me, then he went to his room, and at seven this morning I was awakened by the hotel clerk, who told me our manager was a suicide. That's all there is to it. We're here, but we're practically stranded, and that means bust. If the night turns our clear we may have a house; otherwise we won't show. It doesn't look encouraging at this moment."

The stage manager spoke truly, for the rain was beating heavily against the windows of the reading-room, and the street outside looked dreary and uncomfortable. Unless the weather cleared there was small prospect that the people of Phalanx would care to venture from their comfortable home to witness the finest show on earth.

"Pittston is billed," said Charlie, "but, of

course, I didn't do anything at Jackson. I told the local manager of Rickaby's death, and requested him to hold the date for us, if applied for, until to-night, and he promised to do so."

"All right. By the way, Bulgin was here when we arrived, waiting to see Rickaby about taking up his work again. The news was an unpleasant surprise to him, for he hasn't a cent. I was thinking of reorganizing on the commonwealth plan, all hands to ante up what they can afford to get a start; but this weather has kind of discouraged us, and I don't know whether I'll propose it to the others or not. If we could only light on to an 'angel' with a few hundreds I'd much prefer it."

Briggs had nothing more to say; in fact, the situation was too gloomy to dwell upon, so Charlie ascertained the number of Estelle Vance's room and went upstairs to call on her. The meeting was a distinct pleasure to both young people. Charlie told her about his four weeks' experience ahead of the show, and his story both amused and interested her.

"Well, it did me a power of good, Estelle," he said. "I learned more about the show business than I ever expected to pick up in so short a time. I wouldn't be the least afraid to take a combination on the road on my own hook, if I had the capital. And that reminds me I haven't told you of my exciting experience right here in Phalanx."

Whereupon, Unger told about how he had rescued little Miss Burnett and saved the mayor's team from a smash-up; how he had afterward been carried away by the grateful father to his luxurious home on the Dundee road; how nicely he had been treated by both Mr. Burnett and his wife, and finally how the gentleman had promised him a liberal financial backing whenever he went into the business on his own hook.

"Now," continued the boy, with animation, "what's the matter with my jumping into Mr. Rickaby's shoes, and saving the 'Metropolitan Stock Company' from going to pieces? Here's the whole show, completely booked solid up to next May, and all that's needed to keep things moving is a little money to meet our present obligations, and provide against a possible streak of poor business during the next week. I've only to go to Mayor Burnett and ask for the dough, and it's mine without question. What do you say, sweetheart? Shall I do it, and put my shoulder to the wheel?"

"It's wonderful to think that you have a ready-made 'angel' waiting to be milked, as we people call it. If you think you can pull out and make a success of the venture, I advise you by all means to take advantage of your opportunity."

"You are in favor of it, then?" said Unger, in a pleased tone.

"Conditionally, I am. That is, I mean if you really believe your ability is on a par with your confidence. Otherwise you will only throw away the gentleman's good money without benefiting yourself. You have an advantage; the show is, as you have said, in full running shape. We are well booked for the whole route. It isn't as risky as if you were starting out new with an untried production."

Charlie was thoroughly enthused with the idea, and lost no time in going down to the mayor's

office, three blocks away, and asking to see Mr. Burnett. The gentleman was just preparing to set out for his home. He was surprised, but nevertheless pleased, to see Unger, and readily consented to spare him time for the interview he asked for. Then Charlie got right down to business, and laid his facts and figures before the great man of Phalanx. Mr. Burnett listened attentively, asked many questions, and finally expressed himself satisfied that Charlie appeared to be equal to the emergency.

"How much money shall you require?" he asked the boy.

Charlie mentioned a moderate sum, but said it would be well for the success of the enterprise if Mr. Burnett would agree to stand for a touch in the event that the company got up against hard-luck when the treasury was low.

"My dear boy, nothing will give me greater pleasure than to see you through this undertaking. Whatever money you may require at any time, telegraph me, and I will forward it to you. I shall take a personal interest in your show, and I expect to find that you will land a winner. Here is my check for double the sum you have asked me to start you with. Now good-bye. I will be at the Opera House to-night if the weather permits."

They shook hands warmly and parted. Charlie returning to the hotel in high spirits to consult with Briggs. An hour later every member of the company was notified that the show would go on under new management, and that they would be expected to sign new contracts for the balance of the season with Charles Unger, late property man and advance agent, who had taken over everything, and would be responsible for salaries, which they were assured would be forthcoming regularly every Monday afternoon, whether business was good or otherwise.

CHAPTER XIV.—Charlie Proves That As A Manager He Is All To the Good.

"Our new manager says he's looking for experience," grinned Douglas Barnum to Frank Frost, the leading man, in their dressing-room that night.

"He can get lots of that," laughed the other; "but he's a clever boy, all right, and I shouldn't be surprised if he pulled out in good shape. Briggs says he's got a money-bag at his back—the swellest kind of an 'angel.' What luck some people fall into!"

"I'll bet the 'angel' gets his leg stretched to the limit before the season is over," replied Barnum, with a sneer.

"What do you care, as long as you get your money?"

"Oh, I don't care," answered the heavy man, turning away and beginning to put on his make-up.

"It's turned out lucky for Bulgin. He was flat on his uppers when he came out of the hospital. Unger sent him out to Jackson by the 5.55 train, to take up the advance work where he left off. And do you know, to give the old boy his due, Charlie did good work ahead of the show. You wouldn't imagine he started out a greenhorn. Take my word for it, that boy is a winner—he's all to the good."

Contrary to general expectation, the weather cleared off about dark. Briggs declared this was encouraging for the new manager.

"You see, Charlie, the house was dark Monday and Tuesday, and the storm kept everybody indoors last evening when 'A Hot Old Time' played to rotten business, so you ought to be able to gather them in now that the atmosphere conditions are in our favor."

"I'm looking for a big crowd. I've billed this town myself, you know, and have worked every kind of a device for getting the people interested in 'Fighting Fate.' I shall be surprised if the results are not satisfactory."

Charlie, of course, stood at the door himself, and the people began coming before the doors were open. The house filled up rapidly, and by eight o'clock every decent seat had been sold. It was about this time that Major Burnett, his wife and little daughter drove up, alighted and entered the Opera House. He was recognized, of course. Charlie had reserved the best box for him, and had instructed the ticket-seller to refuse pay for it; but the mayor wouldn't have it that way. He insisted on planking down his money like everybody else. When the curtain rose at 8.10, the "standing room only" sign was displayed at the entrance, and late arrivals, determined to go in, had to content themselves with positions at the back of the rear orchestra and dress-circle seats. Truly it was a packed house—a thing that brings joy to the hearts of the performers and management alike. In due time Charlie counted the house and settled with the local manager.

"I wonder what kind of a rabbit's foot Unger has?" remarked Douglas Barnum to Frank Frost, three weeks from the night they had showed in Phalanx.

The company was in Peoria. The weather had been bad the night before, though fair in Madison, twenty miles away, where the "Metropolitan Stock Company" had played to a good house, consequently the inhabitants of Peoria flocked like geese to the Opera House, until the S. R. O. sign had to be put outside before eight, and this fact had got around to the actors in their dressing-rooms.

"Why do you ask?" inquired Frost, applying a lining pencil to his forehead.

"Because I've never seen such all-fired luck as he is having. Three times he's knocked the socks out of 'A Hot Old Time,' which, in Rickaby's time, was always our Jonah. Then look at the weather; it's played into his hands right from the start. If things keep up this way he'll clear a raft of money by May."

"Well, he deserves it. There isn't a moment he isn't hustling for the show. Why, the notices he's getting in the papers through Bulgin are gems. And look at the way he drums up town on the afternoon of the show. I tell you, Barnum, that boy is a wonder, and I, for one, want to go out with him next season if I can."

The reconstructed combination was certainly pulling in the people wherever "Fighting Fate" was presented. The truth of the matter was, it was a good show, and Estelle Vance, whom Charlie featured on the bills, was at her best. Unger believed in lavishing paper, circus fashion, about the towns he played, and adjacent places.

He had made faithful reports to Ogden Burnett of his success, and had already returned to the 'angel' the full amount of the check he had received as a starter, so was no longer under financial obligations to any one, except to the person in town who advanced the money originally to Rickaby to pay for the scenery and the first paper. And so the "Metropolitan Stock Company" continued upon its route, adding every week to its artistic and pecuniary success, until the last night of the season was reached in the town of Jefferson. There had been a satisfactory advance sale, and a good house was expected. Charlie, however, had determined to wind his season up with what he called a blaze of glory. He resolved to have the S. R. O. board out that night for sure, and the means that he took to accomplish it surprised the whole company.

Estelle Vance was to be a party to it, though she had at first demurred. But Charlie was the most persuasive young fellow in the world, and soon managed to overrule her objections. The two evening papers of Jefferson announced prominently that a real marriage would take place on the stage of Burton's Theatre that night. That at the close of the show the curtain would be lifted, and then Manager Charles Unger would be united in the bonds of matrimony to the charming and talented young leading woman of the "Metropolitan Stock Company"—Miss Estelle Vance.

Well, you couldn't have packed another person in the house that night when the curtain went up on the first act of "Fighting Fate," and perhaps Estelle Vance didn't get the ovation of her life, and a curtain call after every act. At the close of the play, according to announcement, a well-known minister, who had occupied a box with his family, walked on the stage, where the entire company was gathered in a semi-circle with Charlie Unger and Estelle Vance in the center and a little in advance. The happy pair were duly married, and the audience gave them a glorious send-off. Charlie, after acknowledging in behalf of himself and his bride the felicitations of the big audience, announced that two other members of the company would go through the same ordeal, and forthwith introduced William Duane and Tillie Jacobs, the sprightly soubrette, who were then married, also, to the immense delight of everybody present.

It was a red-letter occasion for the company, who adjourned to a liberal spread provided for them at the hotel. Next day the company broke up as an organization and returned to town with wads of coin large enough to last them through the summer. After squaring all accounts, Charlie Unger found he had cleared nearly \$20,000 since taking up the managerial reins at Phalanx.

Next season he took out nearly the same people, with the same play, over a new route, and his profits were more than \$30,000. This season he has a new play, in which his wife who is still printed on the bills as Estelle Vance, has made a distinct hit.

Next week's issue will contain "LUCKY LEE, THE OFFICE BOY; or, THE NERVIEST BOY IN NEW YORK."

CURRENT NEWS

FINDS FIR TREE 12 FEET THICK

In Josephine County, Oreg., L. E. Wilkes, surveyor, came across a Douglas fir of immense proportions. Measured at breast height the tree was 38 feet 8 inches in circumference, or about 12 feet 2 inches in diameter.

A LOAFER'S PARADISE

Probably the laziest people in the world are Svatnians, who live in the inaccessible mountain range between the Black and Caspian Seas. They have made no advance toward civilization in 2,500 years. It is their invariable rule to observe holidays four times a week, with saints' days as extras.

YOU CAN'T BREAK THIS GLASS

Modern researches for a hard but unbreakable glass ready began in the year of 1774, when De la Bastie began to cool red-hot glass slowly and produced glass by his method which could be thrown violently to the ground without breaking. Another sort of glass has the quality of resistance to abrupt changes of temperature.

There are two sorts of quartz-glasses, the one the product of rock-crystal, the real transparent quartz-glass; the other untransparent, the product of rock-flint. Melting pots, tubes, clubs, flasks, refrigerators, evaporating basins, different fittings for electrical purposes and many other products for electric lighting are made of it.

The most remarkable quality of the quartz-glass is its very small coefficient of heat expansion, it only amounts of 0.00000059, in different words: whether one heats quartz-glass extremely—or whether one cools it extremely—it barely expands or contracts. Practically its size remains the same. Such glass can be heated red-hot and dipped while red-hot into cold water without cracking. It is this quality which has helped it to such ready admission into the technical and chemical laboratories. Besides this, it shows still quite a number of valuable qualities; the firmness of quartz-glass against breaking amounts to 12 kilograms per square millimeter compared to 4.9 kilograms for ordinary and 1.0 to 4.0 kilograms for ordinary glass.

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Wrecked On The Desert

— OR —

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By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER XIII.—(Continued).

"Well, our work is done. It is not as I feared. Now to make all haste back. I'm sorry now I ever yielded to my fear of Sanders and left home and those who so greatly need my care. But Andy is staunch, and so is Pedro. As for old Juan, I have my doubts. It may as easily have been the Mestizos as the doctor. Boy, I have deceived myself."

"We must make all haste back, hoping for the best," replied Jack. "We can do no good here. None of them could possibly have survived that fall."

"Never," said the unknown, and they started on their homeward run, with no other guide than the range, which loomed up plainly before them.

"Are the sandstorms always fatal to those caught in them?" inquired Jack.

"They have been so to many a poor wretch," was the reply. "I have been caught twice. Once I was nearly gone, when the wind mercifully dropped."

A long silence followed.

Jack's eyes were everywhere. A light breeze had now sprung up. The boy's imagination hung on Nemo's words.

Suddenly, well on ahead, Jack caught sight of what appeared to be a man stretched upon the sand, and called Nemo's attention to it.

"That's what I see," replied the unknown. "Can it be that one of them jumped in time to save himself?"

The man did not move as they drew nearer, but when they were close in upon him he suddenly raised his head and looked their way. Evidently he had caught the clatter of the old car.

"Heaven preserve us!" gasped Nemo. "It is he!"

"Sanders!" echoed Jack.

"Even so. Boy, I am dumb. That man is the direct cause of all my misfortunes, and they have been many; yet, I am not vindictive. If he is suffering we must aid him."

They had food and water with them, of course, and among other things a flask of whisky.

"You want me to do the talking?" asked Jack.

"Yes. He must not recognize my voice. Yet, how can I help it? We can't leave him here. If we take him to the oasis sooner or later he must learn the truth."

They ran up to the man in silence.

"He's about all in," remarked Jack, as the man's head sank down upon the sand again.

He jumped out and knelt beside him.

"Whisky!" the man gasped, faintly

"You shall have it!" cried Jack, and the drink was administered. It revived him, and he sat up, gasping:

"You have come too late. I am dying. Listen."

"I am listening," replied Jack, gently.

"My name is Peter H. Sanders. I belong in Carson City. I was with prospectors—they ran their cars into a sink, and all perished but me. I jumped, broke my arm and three ribs. The names are Ralph Spencer, Seattle; Henry Trueman and Dan Finlay, both of Rome. Do you get me, brother, say?"

"I get you," replied Jack. "What brought you here?"

"Gold. Spencer found an old man—— Who is that man? Why does he wear that black cloth mask?"

With a mighty effort, he staggered to his feet, his left arm hanging limply. That death had set its seal upon him was easily seen.

"Peter, it is I," Nemo said, in a strained voice. "I forgive you. I will try to save you if——"

He got no further, for suddenly, seized with strength sufficient for his purpose, Sanders made a rush for the car, clutched at the mask, tore it away, and, with a wild laugh, dropped dead on the sand.

Words fail to convey the quickness with which all this occurred.

Jack turned away, sick with horror of that awful face.

The nose was gone, so were the lips—but why enlarge?

Nemo stepped quietly from the car, and, disengaging the mask from Sanders's stiffening fingers, restored it, and examined the man in silence.

"He is dead," he said, presently. "I propose to stop and bury him."

"I'll help," replied Jack, and they went at it together. By the time the shallow grave was ready, the corpse was cold.

No allusion to the unmasking was made then, nor during the remainder of the ride, which was accomplished without delay.

In fact, Nemo scarcely spoke until they were in the oasis, nearing the desert home.

"A peaceful scene, Jack," he quietly remarked, with a wave of the hand. "Do you wonder now that I don't want to leave it?"

"Indeed, I don't, sir. I hope we shall find all well here."

"Heaven grant it," was the reply, and the car was rounded up at the door.

"Andy!" shouted Nemo.

There was no answer. They jumped out, and Nemo, flinging open the door, staggered back, gasping:

"Why, here's another!"

It was Andy, the hunchback, stretched on the floor—dead—shot through the heart!

Worse was in store for them. The rooms through which they passed were in terrible disorder. Everything appeared to have been overhauled, while as for Arthur, Edna and Pedro, there was no trace of them.

So far as he was concerned, the insane hunchback had spoken the truth. The coming of our boy prospectors to the desert home had proved the beginning of the end.

(To be continued.)

GOOD READING

CORELESS, SEEDLESS PEAR NOW

After seven years of experiment, J. B. Peden of Southmont, Pa., has perfected a seedless and coreless pear, the fruit being a product of several graftings and crossing of species. Of five modified trees in Mr. Peden's orchard one tree this year bore five bushels of coreless pears. The taste of the pears, it is said, is not impaired, and Mr. Peden believes his new fruit will prove particularly good for canning. He has sent specimens to the State and Federal Departments of Agriculture.

GREAT PELTS CARGO ARRIVES AT SEATTLE

Bringing the breath of the Northern seas, the cutter Bear arrived at Seattle, Wash., from points bordering on the Arctic with a cargo of seal skins, fox pelts, walrus tusks and hides, fish, ivory and other typical products of the region.

A total of 7,566 fur-seal skins packed in barrels represented the last of the killings on St. Paul and St. George Islands of the Pribilof group up to Aug. 5. Another batch of skins amounting to nearly 20,000 will arrive on the Victoria late this month. The fox pelts were the last of the previous winter's take.

Blue fox reared by the Government on these islands are profit, living on the seal carcasses and beach food throughout the year. The arrival there of the Bear is an event, because of the usual circus of mascots picked up. This year's menagerie is no exception.

There was a mitsi, or Kamchatka brown bear cub; a tame Arctic fox, some Mongolian cats, a seal kitten, Anidyr malamute dogs, a tame penguin and a reindeer calf.

IT'S THE LADY GNATS THAT BITE

Summer is past and perhaps the many little discomforts that it always brings have been forgotten, for the time being, but it is interesting to note that one of the little summer pests bears out the statement that "the female is deadlier than the male." We refer to the gnat, most pestiferous of insects. It is the lady gnat that so annoys us every summer with her bites. The male gnats are the butterflies of the species and spend their time dancing about through the air, rising and falling and gliding about while their better halves are searching for food. We have all the sympathy in the world for the hard-working lady gnat, but we do object to her selection of ourselves as an article of gnat diet.

Gnats live naturally on vegetables, sucking out the juices, but some of them have displayed a preference for human blood. In the tropics it is necessary to sleep under gnat-proof nets, for there the little pests carry diseases from one person to another.

The life history of the gnat is quite interesting. The young gnat lives in the water, a hungry little insect, that eats its own weight in food many times each day. It is equipped with a tiny brush near its mouth with which it sweeps the food in with remarkable rapidity. It gradually changes

form until it becomes an ablong little creature that bobs around in the water. After a time spent in this way, it comes to the surface, opens, and out flies a gnat, ready for its pursuit of happiness or food, according to its sex.

THERE ARE MANY BIRDS AND BEASTS THE ZOO WOULD WELCOME

It was reported recently that protographs have been obtained of a notornia, an almost unknown flightless bird, of which only four specimens have ever been secured. There are many other birds and beasts in various parts of the world which have never been caught nor photographed and which the various zoological societies would pay tidy sums for. There is a nameless creature supposed to be living in the Andes Mountains that has so far escaped capture. Various travelers have brought back tales about it and many expeditions have been organized, but so far their efforts to capture it have been futile. Bones and other remains have been discovered giving evidence of its existence, and these point to its classification in the rat family, but indicate that its size is that of a grown dog.

Another animal known to exist in certain parts of the Congo has been named the okapi and was discovered about twenty years ago by Sir Harry Johnston, a British explorer and traveler. The discovery of bones and a complete hide proved the okapi to be an unknown animal, apparently a cross between the giraffe and zebra. The mylodon, a species of the ground sloth, is still another creature that is at large. Some years ago Hesketh Prichard, British author and hunter, led an expedition into Patagonia in search of this beast. The trip was unsuccessful, however.

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HARRY E. WOLFF, Publisher, Inc.

166 West 23d St., New York

INTERESTING RADIO NEWS AND HINTS

GOOD AMPLIFIERS

The UV-199 gives as good results as a detector and amplifier as the UV-200 and UV-201.

RADIO AND THE FISHERMEN

Herring fishermen off the Swedish coast are being kept posted on the location of schools of fish by radio telephone. These tips on the whereabouts of the herring have resulted in an increase of efficiency on the part of the fishing crews. On an average they return with a hold filled with fish more often than they have done before the installation of radio. Germany, it will be recalled, was the first country to make extensive use of radio in connection with fishing operations. However, the German application of radio was limited to radio telegraphy, and called for a knowledge of the telegraph code on the part of the fishermen making use of the service.

HONEYCOMB COILS

In using honeycomb coils it will be necessary to obtain one of the stands or mounts for these coils. These mounts are so arranged that the primary and tickler coil can be adjusted in their relative position to the secondary coil, which is stationary. This is a very important adjustment in honeycomb coil sets.

A circuit in which each state of audio frequency is reflected, that is "turned back in the same direction whence it came," through the tubes in the same order as the radio frequency is called a straight reflex.

Wave length range of a receiving set has nothing to do with the receiving range. When a set is said to be a long wave receiver it means that the tuner will respond to high wave lengths.

WIRELESS TELEPHONY AND TELEGRAPHY COMPARED

This is an abstract of a report of a sub-committee of the Radio Research Board of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. The possibility of establishing satisfactory radio telephone communication on a commercial basis for a distance of 3,000 miles or more is considered to be remote. The power for radio telephone service is estimated to be from 3 to 20 times greater than that at present considered necessary for similar radio telegraph services for the same range. For medium ranges, say 1,000 miles, the difficulty as regards a commercial service are practically the same as those for longer distances. The position as regards short-distance communication (200 miles or under) is considered to be more hopeful. The conditions requisite for a commercial service are enumerated and the extent to which these can be met is stated.

BUY WITH CARE

When purchasing parts for a radio set, keep away from irresponsible concerns and you will be well repaid for paying a few cents more to an established responsible dealer, who could not afford to stoop to trickery to make a sale.

1. Be sure that you have no crossed wires or short circuits.

2. Batteries must be in perfect condition.

3. Good insulating materials must be used throughout.

4. Keep as shy as possible of grid connections.

5. Avoid capacity effects between grid and plate circuits.

6. Avoid coupling between transformers. Do not mount them too close together, they should be three or four inches apart.

7. It is essential to have a good ground connection and a properly insulated antenna. It is a good plan to satisfy yourself that all connections are right, and mechanically and electrically perfect by tracing same from antenna over to antenna tubes, transformers, batteries to the ground.

AMATEURS BEAT THE SUN

Amateur radio operators virtually beat the sun across the continent during the recent daylight tests, when a message started promptly at dawn on the east coast reached Los Angeles, Cal., before the sun appeared above the Pacific horizon.

Striking the dark belt near the middle of the country, favorable conditions were met which made the transcontinental trip possible in one hour and twenty-five minutes, with only two intermediate station relays.

An early start with the rising sun clinched the laurels for D. McR. Parsley, operator of amateur station 4FT, at Wilmington, N. C., according to advices received by the American Radio Relay League from California recently. The average daylight range for amateur transmitting stations is 100 miles.

HINTS FOR RADIO USERS

When winding coils, be sure that turns do not overlap and that they are wound tight and evenly. Do not use insulating varnish or shellac on winding. Solder all connections, but be careful not to use too much soldering flux, as it is bound to cause you trouble in the end. After soldering wipe away the surplus flux.

See that tubes are making good contact. It is a good stunt to scrape lightly the prongs in sockets. Use the proper size grid-leak and grid condensers for whichever tubes you use. Any reliable dealer will gladly give you this information.

Do not use cheap materials offered by unreliable, inexperienced, fly-by-night concerns. It is the policy of these concerns to offer parts for a circuit, but upon investigation it was found the parts offered for sale were hardly worthy of their name, due to extreme cheapness and lack of ability on the part of their makers, which shows no engineering ability or knowledge of the most fundamental principles of governing radio communications, and their crime being the substitution of apparatus or parts, particularly grid-leaks, condensers and transformers.

RADIO IN MINE RESCUE WORK

In the near future radio telephony will probably play an important part in the work of colliery rescue parties. As the rescuers carry out their duties, constant communication will be kept up with those directing operations from the base. That is the object underlying a series of experiments being conducted at Ashington Colliery in England. A considerable measure of success has already attended their efforts, and quite recently speech and music were successfully received underground. A party equipped with a three-tube receiving set descended the shaft of the Carl Pit, and fixed a 20-foot aerial on the baulks supporting the roof. Only one head phone was used, but so clear was the reception that the five men composing the party all heard distinctly. Experiments have already been carried out to depths of 300 yards, and it is expected to test reception at depths of 1,000 yards.

RETRANSMISSION OF TIME SIGNALS

Several broadcasting stations, among them WJZ, New York, and WOC, Davenport, Iowa, retransmit the time signals radiated by Station NAA, Arlington, Va. The time signals are received by WJZ direct from Arlington by radio. The time ticks are then passed through a transformer, two power amplifiers, modulating tubes and the remainder of the transmitting apparatus to the aerial.

The signals picked up by listeners are exactly the same as if heard direct from Arlington. Time signals are broadcast by NAA twice daily at 11:55 a. m. to noon and from 9:55 p. m. to 10 p. m., Eastern Standard Time. The signals consist of a series of dots, each dot representing a second. Transmission is begun at 11:55 a. m. and twenty-nine seconds are transmitted. The thirtieth second of each minute is omitted to make clear the passing of the half minute. Twenty-five dots are then broadcast and the last five seconds of the minute are omitted to signify the end of that minute and the beginning of the next. The last ten seconds of the last minute of the hour are omitted, and at noon and 10 p. m. a long dash indicates the exact time.

TIME SIGNALS AND GEOGRAPHERS.

Radio was used to send Standard Time signals 3,000 miles to a geological survey party which has just finished its field work in Alaska, after establishing seven triangulation stations on the coast between Dixon's Entrance and Skagway. Cable and land lines were not available, but by special arrangements the navy, through its station NSS, Annapolis, Md., flashed time signals every morning from 3:55 to 4 o'clock. The work is now complete and NSS has stopped sending out the time signals at that hour.

A special radio receiving set equipped with an automatic chronograph made it possible to record simultaneously both the second ticks of Annapolis time signals and the ticks of the field clock. The record was made in saw-toothed lines on a revolving drum. The accuracy required being too close for detection by ear, a written record was necessary, and by this system errors of only two or three thousandth of a second were included. Radio carried the time signals at the speed of sun-

light, yet there was lag amounting to about one or two hundredths of a second in the 3,000-mile flight from Maryland to Alaska.

It is expected that radio time signals will be used in the near future to establish exact longitudes and the Hertzian waves may enter into the calculations to determine whether or not continents and islands move east or west. It is stated by some authorities that heretofore longitudinal bearings have been made far too inaccurate. With radio time this will be obviated, more accurate data can be secured and movements of known spots on the earth's surface noted if thirty feet or more. Some geographers contend that Greenwich has moved westward as much as three miles, but this cannot be disputed scientifically until exact longitudinal bearings taken several years apart are available. Radio time signals will help obtain reliable observations.

DIFFERENCE IN TUBES

There are two types of tubes, those which operate with a storage battery and those which require one or more dry cells. The chief advantage of the dry-cell tube is that it eliminates the expense of a storage battery and the trouble of having it recharged. The results obtained with both types of tubes are about equal. If dry-cell tubes are used, their sockets should be mounted on sponge rubber or springs to prevent ringing sounds caused by jars which vibrate the elements of the tube and create the disturbing noise. It is a good idea in purchasing a complete set which employs dry-cell tubes to make sure that the sockets are mounted in cushion supports.

Radio is not yet standardized, and it will be several years before radio sets will be arranged in classes according to quality and price as the automobile is to-day. The radio business withstood the summer slump much better than was expected, and far better than it did during the summer of 1922. The outlook for the coming winter season is very good, and correspondence indicates that purchasing of complete sets will be more popular during the approaching radio season than the assembling of sets at home. Reflex circuits, tuned radio frequency and more complex circuits are for the experimenter and the one who is familiar with radio. The standard regenerative detector and two-stage audio frequency amplifier is still the reliable circuit for those who wish to assemble a set for dependable service. A well-designed detector and two-stage audio set, properly installed, will pick up the majority of high-power broadcasting stations in the United States, and a loud speaker can be used on nearby stations. The simpler a circuit the easier it is to control, and there is less opportunity for something to go wrong.

There is no doubt that radio has come to stay. It has done much good and unites the people of the earth; it carries religious service and entertainment to persons out to direct contact with the Church and theatre; it amuses the sick and shut-ins besides its many other useful purposes. High-grade apparatus does not deteriorate in value as quickly as cheap instruments. The general public is fast becoming educated in the theory and practical side of radio, and many of them are now quick to recognize that cheaply built sets soon become obsolete.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 16, 1923

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

BRICKLAYER SAVED \$4,000 QUICKLY

John Rutherford, 50 years old, a bricklayer who came to New York fifteen months ago from Bridgeport, Conn., where he lived at 168 Beach street, fell dead on the sidewalk in front of 685 Third avenue about 6 o'clock the other morning. Later, when being identified at Bellevue Hospital, a bank book was found in his pocket which showed \$4,000 in deposits, beginning fifteen months ago.

YOUNG GIRL KILLED BY PEANUT

Helen Ruth, seven years old, daughter of Charles Robinson of Iron River, died in a hospital and suffocation caused by a peanut lodged in the bronchial tube. All efforts by her parents and doctors to extricate it were unsuccessful and she was brought to Marquette, Mich., in the hope that an X-ray protograph would help, but the peanut was too soft to register on the plate and the girl died.

ANIMALS' EYES

No two animals have eyes exactly alike. In every case they are adapted to the special needs of their owners.

The eyes of flesh-eating creatures are closer together than those of vegetarians. This is said to be due to the habit which the former have of fixing their gaze on their victims before springing. Human eyes are closer together than those of any other creature that eats flesh.

Tigers, lions, cats and others of the same family are unable to see at great distances, but for objects near at hand their sight is very keen. Lions and tigers have round pupils, which grow bigger when the animal is angry.

Cats have pupils which can be dilated enormously. In the dark, or when the cat is angry, the pupils look almost round. In the first case, what little light there is is reflected by the retina, which is the explanation of the fact that a cat's eyes look green at night.

Animals that live on grass have large eyes, placed as a rule at the sides. This gives a wide range of vision and enables the creatures to watch for danger while cropping grass.

PREDICTS FEW SNOWSTORMS UNTIL FEBRUARY

William O. Altman of Kane, Pa., weather seer, whose advice is said to have been sought frequently in the past by Weather Bureau officials in Washington, made his forecast for the coming winter. Here it is:

Nov. 15 to Dec. 31, cold rains and snows, without any extensive snowfall indicated, although there will be some severe cold weather.

Jan. 1 to Feb. 15, the open part of winter will occur, with warm rains and thunder storms, growing colder toward the end of that period.

Feb. 15 to March 31, cold weather with sleet and snowstorms will rule. There will be numerous snowstorms from the Northwest.

The birds and wild animals of the woods aid Altman in his prophesies. He also relies greatly on the much despised caterpillar. "Watch the birds in the air and the crawling things under foot and you won't go far wrong," is his way of telling how he reaches his conclusions.

The old woodsman complained that he had "been pestered continually with queries for information, and Weather Bureau officials at Washington wanted some of it as well as others."

LAUGHS

Mrs. Backmedders—What's them numbers on the autermobile fer, Hiram? Mr. Backmedders—Why, that's the feller's score. It shows how many folks he's run over.

Floor Walker—Hurry out, madam! The store's afire. Mrs. Bargains—Oh, is it? Then I'll just wait for the fire sale.

"Strike three," said the umpire. "Batter out!" "Whad d'ye mean, out?" protested the batter. "Yuh big stiff, that last one was a mile outside." "You're fined ten dollars," said the umpire. "Do you understand that?" "Sure, I get you now. Money talks."

"Papa is the captain of our ship and mamma is the pilot." "And what are you, my little man?" "I guess I must be the compass. They're always boxing me."

"There is one thing I can never understand," said the patient-looking woman, "and that is why a man who has been sitting with a crowd all afternoon at a baseball game will come home and say that the noise of the children makes him nervous."

Adjutant (inspecting barracks)—Suppose the barracks were to catch fire, what would you do? Bugler—Sound the bugle, sir. Adjutant—And what call would you give? Bugler—Cease fire, sir.

Bobbie's mother had just taken out her winter garments. "Ma," said the observant little fellow, "what did moths live on before Adam and Eve wore clothes?"

INTERESTING ARTICLES

A WONDERFUL PARADISE

The way in which the departed Scandinavian heroes passed their time in Valhalla, or in the palace of Odin, is described in several places in the Edda.

They have every day the pleasure of arming themselves, marshaling themselves in military order, engaging in battle and being 'all cut to pieces'; but when the stated hour of repast arrives their bodies are reunited and they return on horseback safe to the hall of banquet, where they feed heartily on the flesh of a boar and drink beer out of the skulls of their enemies until they are in a state of intoxication.

Odin sits by himself at a particular table. The heroes are served by the beautiful virgins named Valkirie, who officiate as their cupbearers. But the pleasures of love do not enter at all into the joys of the extraordinary paradise.

WAR GOD'S TEMPLE UNEARTHED IN BABYLON

Traces of structures erected during an early Babylonian period that are expected to add greatly to the known history of that time and to rival in importance the discoveries in the tomb of King Tutankhamen at Luxor, Egypt, have been found in Mesopotamia by the expedition of an American museum. Already stamped bricks of Samsuiluna, seventh King of the first Babylonian dynasty (2030-2043 B. C.), have been unearthed and translated, as well as tablets inscribed during the reign of Samula-Ilu, the second King of that time (2211-2176 B. C.), and the temple built by him to the war god Ilbaba. Experts regard those preliminary finds as proof that the excavators have approached strata that conceal remains of the earliest Babylonian civilization. They expect to find many relics of historical value later.

NATIONAL FOREST RECEIPTS SHOW BIG GAIN FOR YEAR

Receipts from national forest resources during the fiscal year of 1923 totaled \$5,335,818, according to the final tabulation made by the Department of Agriculture. This amount is greater than the receipts for any previous year and is about \$1,000,000 larger than the average annual receipts for the preceding five years.

Sales of timber and live stock grazing permits were responsible for most of the money received, although permits for the use of national forest lands for summer homes and hotels and for other recreational uses figured in the total to a greater extent than ever before.

By authority of the Acts of Congress governing receipts from national forest resources the sum of \$1,321,423 will be paid to the States containing national forests for the use of the school and road funds of the counties embracing national forest lands.

MYSTERY SHIP IN ICEBERG

For centuries mystery ships have sailed the seas, guided only by the winds of chance. One of

them was found by a steamer captain rounding the Horn recently, according to a writer in *Popular Mechanics*. While groping his way into the open, a gigantic mass of ice carrying a large three-masted schooner, with its boats still in the clefts, was sighted. Efforts were made to find the survivors, but no trace of them was discovered. Another sea tragedy was added to the already long list of those as yet unsolved when a Greenland whaler came upon a strange looking derelict, battered and weather-worn, apparently built in the last century and icebound for years. A boarding crew found in the cabin the body of a young woman, preserved by the Arctic frosts. Near a long dead fire was the remains of a young man, still holding a flint and steel.

DRY BREAD AND WATER FOR BOOT-LEGGERS

County Judge Orville Chatt of Tekamah, Neb., has a special diet for bootleggers convicted in his court. It is dry bread and cold water. The bread is extra dry. The sheriff is instructed this means bread that has been baked for several days. Sixty to ninety days is the regulation punishment for the rum runners brought before him. For the first fifteen days he prescribes bread and water, and if it is a sixty-day sentence the last fifteen are on this diet. If it is a ninety-day sentence it begins and ends with a fifteen-day period when this is all the food the prisoner gets.

Judge Chatt says it is quite essential that when the man gets out he goes with the recollection of just having completed a fifteen-day round of bread and water. No second offenders have yet been before his court, and the only bootleggers arrested in months following this sort of sentence were a pair who traveled with a carnival company.

BED OF THE HUDSON FALLS, CAVING IN

Three minutes after a southbound train filled with commuters on the New York Central at 2.30 A. M. the other day passed a point two miles south of Garrison, N. Y., where four tracks are being laid, 400 feet of the roadbed slid into the Hudson. Only one track of the old roadbed was left secure and all trains were stopped for a time. Then the single track was shored and trains were switched north and south over it, while others were sent over the Harlem Division.

Some of the engineers ascribed the slide to a falling away of the river bed. Soundings made in the river forty feet from the bank showed 238 feet and efforts to reach bottom further out failed. Divers were sent for to ascertain what happened to the river, and barges loaded with stone were sent to attempt to fill in the hole.

A work train composed of an engine and flat cars was carried away with the filled ground.

The Twentieth Century, south-bound, and the Empire State Express, north-bound, were among the trains held up. At one time there were seventeen trains stalled.

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HERE AND THERE

ODDITIES

Twelve years ago in Orange County, Va., a man
caught a small turtle and for an experiment
placed it in a box, closing the lid tightly. He in-
tended to open the box within a week, but forgot
it. It was opened recently. The turtle was still
living and was practically the same size as when
placed in the box.

For the first time in hundreds of years the
rules of the courts of Japan, China, India and
Egypt were broken recently when Judge Jean H.
Norris, New York's only woman judge, was al-
lowed to occupy the judicial bench of those coun-
tries.

The first alarm clock made its appearance in
1420, and its owner was a councillor of Milan,
Italy. His clock sounded a bell at a stated hour
and at the same time a little wax candle was
lighted automatically.

The picture theatres in Japan are so construct-
ed that the screen divides them into two parts,
Europeans sitting on the side from which the
picture is produced and the natives on the other.

The English city of Leeds proposes to use
street railways to transport coal direct from the
mines to the factories and other consumers in the
city.

CALIFORNIA'S SMALLEST CITY

Coran, Shask County, the smallest incorporated
city in California, and once a popular mining
camp, with a population of twenty-four, of whom
nine are men, has eight offices to fill at the com-
ing municipal election in April. One of the men,
C. W. Barker, at present a city trustee, is also
justice of the peace. He will not seek re-election.
Every man in the city will be an office-holder un-
less some of the women could be induced to ac-
cept municipal honors.

10,000 POUNDS OF PECANS

As a sample of the pecan crop of Thomas
County this year, Dr. A. D. Little of Thomasville,
Ga., expects to gather from 300 trees on a small
farm owned by him 10,000 pounds of well-matured
nuts. The nuts are of the Frotcher variety and
the trees are well loaded. There are 500 trees in
the orchard, but only 300 are yet at the bearing
stage. From all sections of the county and from
the grove just out of town reports come of heavy
crops, with the nuts beginning to fall.

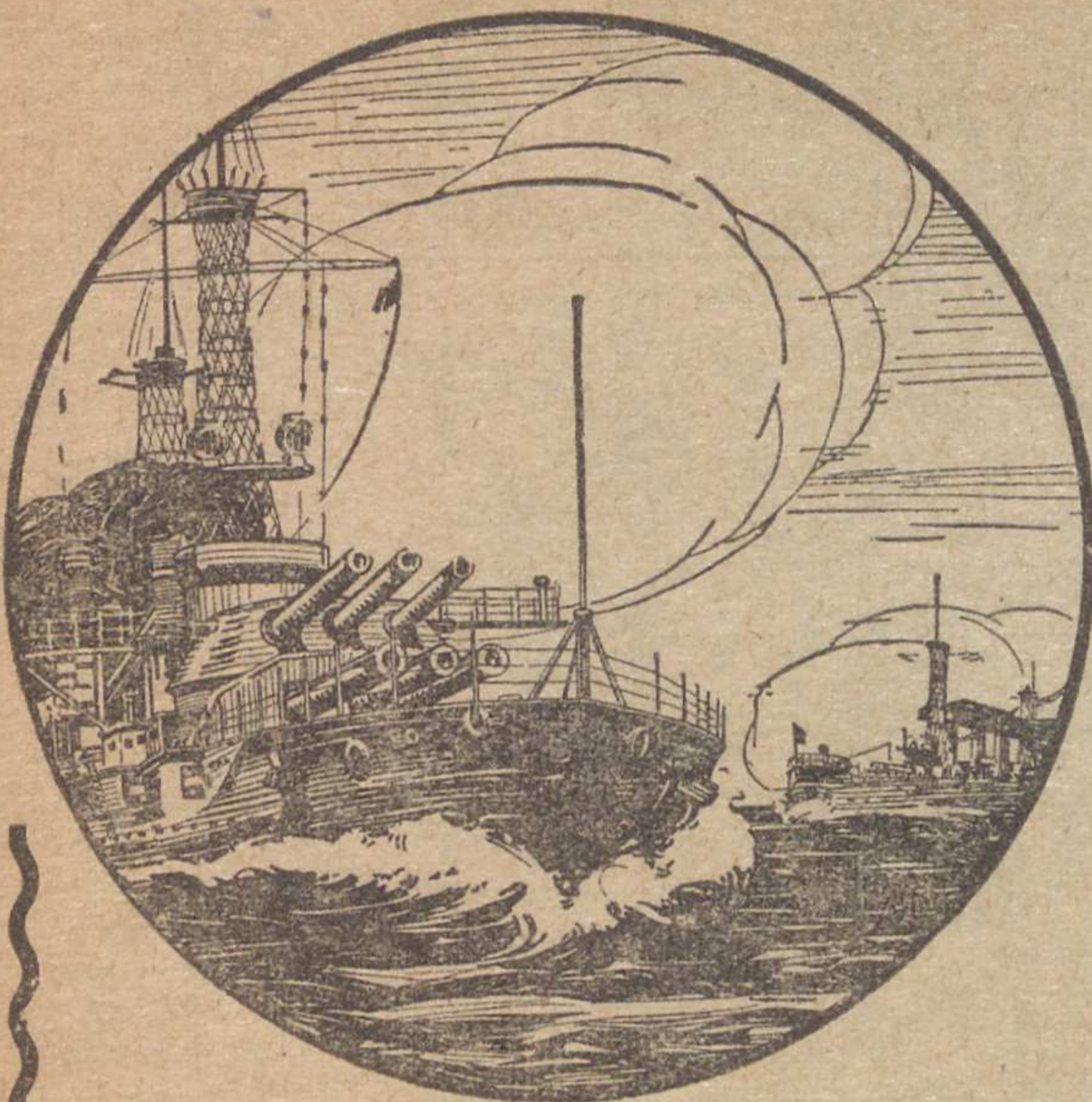
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This Moving Picture Machine which I want to send you FREE, gives clear and life-like Moving Pictures as are shown at any regular Moving Picture show. It flashes moving pictures on the sheet before you. This Machine and Box of Film are FREE—absolutely free to every boy in this land who wants to write for an Outfit, free to girls and free to older people. Read MY OFFER below, which shows you how to get this Marvelous Machine.

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HERE IS what you are to do in order to get this amazing Moving Picture Machine and the real Moving Pictures: Send your name and address—that is all. Write name and address very plainly. Mail today. As soon as I receive it I will mail you 20 of the most beautiful premium pictures you ever saw—all brilliant and shimmering colors. These pictures are printed in many colors and among the titles are such subjects as "Betsy Ross Making the First American Flag"—"Washington at Home"—"Battle of Lake Erie," etc. I want you to distribute these premium pictures on a special 30-cent offer among the people you know. When you have distributed the 20 premium pictures on my liberal offer you will have collected \$6.00. Send the \$6.00 to me and I will immediately send you FREE the Moving Picture Machine with complete Outfit and the Box of Film.

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Read These Letters From Happy Boys

SHOWS CLEAR PICTURES

I have been very slow in sending you an answer. I received my Moving Picture Machine a few weeks ago and I think it is a dandy, and it shows the pictures clear just as you said it would. I am very proud of it. I thank you very much for it and I am glad to have it. I gave an entertainment two days after I got it. Leopold Lamontagne, 54 Summer Ave., Central Falls, R. I.

SOLD HIS FOR \$10.00 AND ORDERED ANOTHER

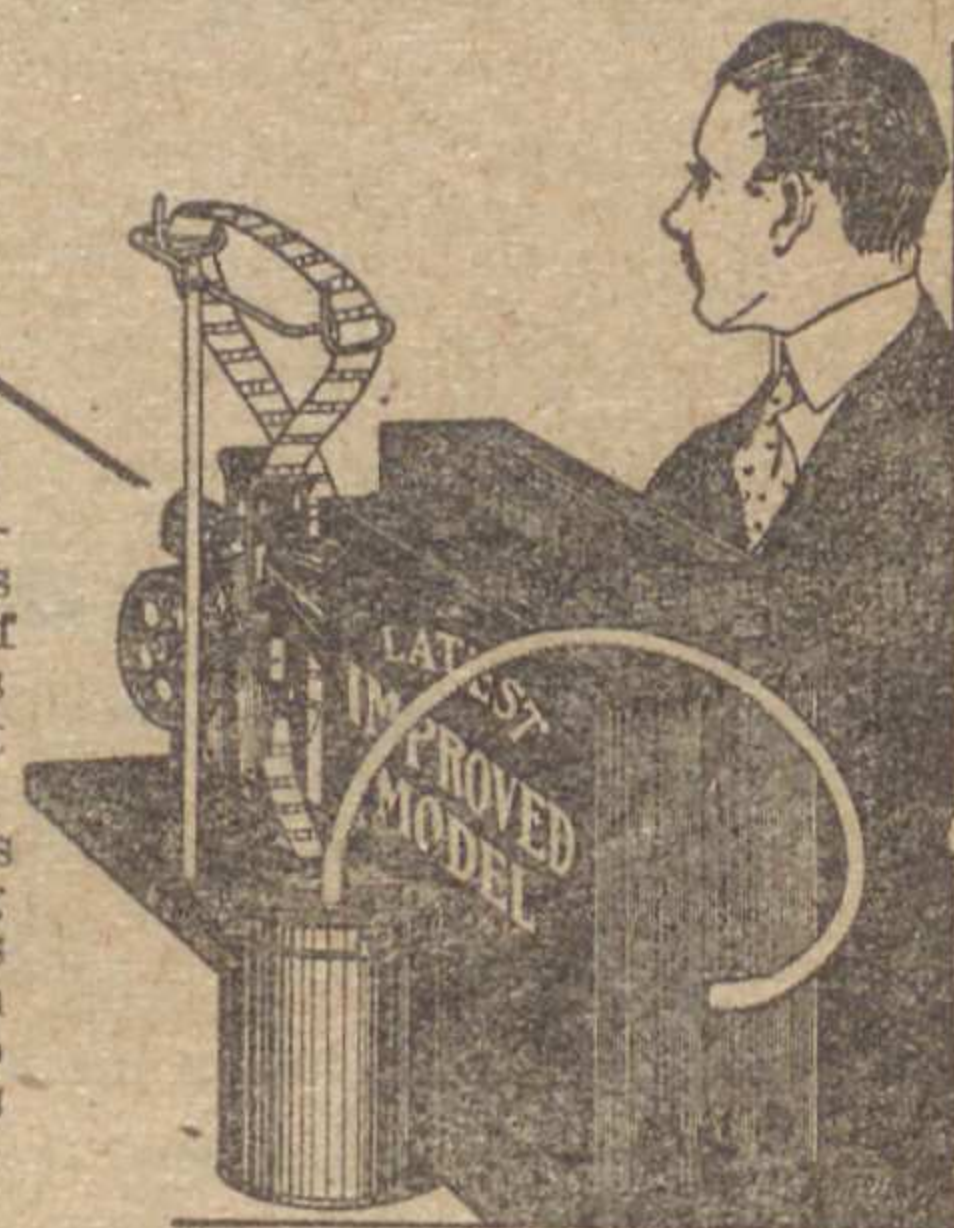
Some time ago I got one of your Machines and I am very much pleased with it. After working it for about a month I sold it for \$10.00 to a friend of mine. He has it and entertains his family nightly. I have now decided to get another one of your machines. Michael Ehereth, Mandan, N. Dak.

WOULD NOT GIVE AWAY FOR \$25.00

My Moving Picture Machine is a good one and I would not give it away for \$25.00. It's the best machine I ever had and I wish everybody could have one. Addie Bresky, Jeanesville, Pa. Box 34.

BETTER THAN A \$12.00 MACHINE

I am slow about turning in my thanks to you, but my Moving Picture Machine is all right. I have had it a long time and it has not been broken yet. I have seen a \$12.00 Machine but would not swap mine for it. Robert Lineberry, care of Revolution Store, Greenboro, N. C.



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The Grand Canyon section of the Colorado was first crossed in 1776 by Father Escalante, a Spanish missionary. Little development took place in the basin, however, until it became a part of the United States, near the middle of the last century. Prior to the Civil War the 300 miles from the mouth of the river to the Needles had been explored, and a few small steamers plied a somewhat uncertain trade on these lower reaches. In 1869 Major Powell made his trip of exploration by boat through the 1,000 miles or more of river and canyon from what is now the railroad station of Green River, Wyo., to the mouth of the Virgin River, Ariz. At that time there were rumors of great waterfalls, passages of the river through underground tunnels, and other like terrors. Powell disproved these rumors and, although his party encountered dangerous rapids and smashed one boat, no lives were lost on the river.

SHORTAGE OF PLUMBERS

The peak demand for bricklayers and plasterers has been passed and now there is a marked shortage of plumbers and steamfitters, according to reports to the New York Building Trades Employers' Association by the Heating and Piping Contractors' Association and Plumbing Contractors' Association.

Bricklayers who were getting a minimum of \$14 and as high as \$20 a day during the summer passed their heyday about August 1. Then began the shortage of plasterers and tile layers, who, by reason of their employers' excessive bidding for men, were able to command wages up to \$14 and \$16 a day, while the bricklayers' wage sank to the official rate of \$12 a day for eight hours' work.

A few weeks ago, with the finishing of apartment houses for occupancy October 1, the market for plasterers and tile layers slumped heavily and wages came down to the official rate of \$12 for plasterers and \$10 for tile layers.

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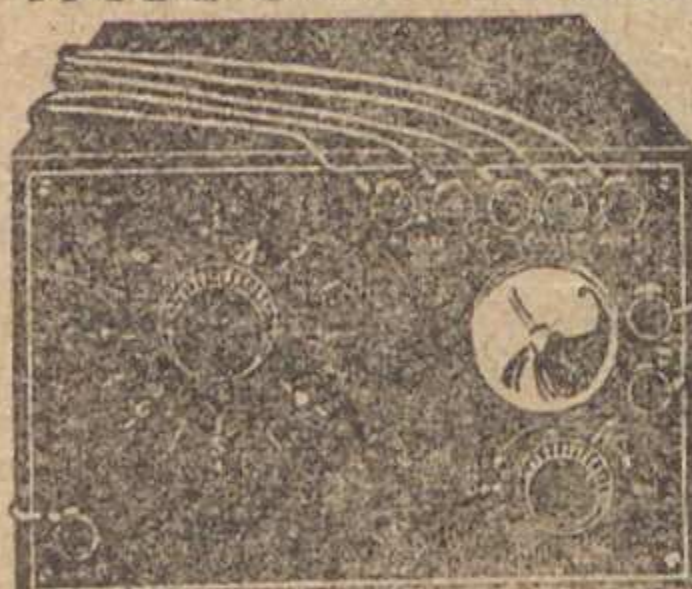
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